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Number 35

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

Coming Out Ahead: The Homosexual Moment in the Academy
Jerry Z. Muller

God in a World of Gods
Peter L. Berger

The Illusion of Moral Neutrality
J. Budziszewski

The Old New Criticism and its Critics
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Opinions and Reviews: Immigration and the Aliens Among Us
George Weigel on Phil Rizzuto, Poet • The Newtape File V
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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1993 ● NUMBER 35

CORRESPONDENCE 2 *Charlotte Smith, Jan Curtis, Robert C. Tompkins, E. Thomas Dowd, Kurt Hoeksema, Michael Wakefield, Joel Allen, Jonathan Chaves, Constance M. Manning, Scott Hoezee, Robert Ditmars, Colin Rowat, Dennis Helming, Eleanor Merrick, Katherine M. Griffin, Robert L. Wilken, Michael Novak, Elizabeth Randall, Kate Patterson, Deborah Binnie, Jim McCrea, Linda Chavez, Richard Doerflinger, Angela Carmella*

OPINION 12 *Camille S. Williams* Sparrows and Lilies
The Newtape File V (retrieved by *Jean Bethke Elshtain*)
George Weigel Unbelievable!

ARTICLES 17 *Jerry Z. Muller* Coming Out Ahead: The Homosexual Moment in the Academy

25 *Peter L. Berger* God in a World of Gods

32 *J. Budziszewski* The Illusion of Moral Neutrality

38 *R. V. Young* The Old New Criticism and its Critics

BOOKS 45 *Charles L. Glenn and Joshua Glenn* Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong by William Kilpatrick, and Reclaiming Our Schools by Edward A. Wynne and Kevin Ryan; *Alan Jacobs* The Children of Men by P. D. James; *Sarah Baumgartner Thurow* Beyond the Culture Wars by Gerald Graff; *Michael Novak* Adam Smith in His Time and Ours by Jerry Z. Muller; *Amy A. Kass* Exiles from Eden by Mark Schwehn; Briefly Noted

THE PUBLIC SQUARE 63 A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life by *Richard John Neuhaus*
This Month: Immigration and the Aliens Among Us, etc.

Poetry by *Barbara Wuest* (16), *Jeanne Murray Walker* (31, 62), *Derrel E. Emmerson* (61)

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FIRST THINGS

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On Women's Ordination

Michael Novak's article "Women, Ordination, and Angels" (April) represents the essence of your fine journal. We sometimes need prompting to think about the thorny issues facing the Church, and Mr. Novak's article made me do precisely that. His piece and many others in First Things contain an underlying theme: What, if anything, is ailing the Church and organized religion in our time?

The question of ordination of women, while provocative, may not be the central issue. The degeneration of curricula at various seminaries and schools of theology may be the reason that the Church no longer attracts the best and brightest of each generation. The free-to-be-you-and-me ethos is not spiritually inspiring. And attending courses in "Pro-Active Listening" filled with trendy psychobabble hardly constitutes an intellectual challenge. This sort of thing does, however, create an atmosphere to encourage the proliferation of sociopaths, con artists, and incompetents. These of course have always been with us (we've all read Tartuffe) but I suspect their number is increasing. . . .

It has occurred to me that at any one time on this planet there is only a tiny percentage of human beings with "the right stuff," spiritually, worthy of the priesthood. Some of these might be women. After all is said and done, what the Church wants, really, is a "few good souls" with moral courage who are able to meet the difficult, wondrous, mysterious challenge that is being part of the priesthood. . . .

Do I think women should be in the priesthood? I don't know. A woman who would become a priest for feminist, as opposed to religious, reasons is every bit as ignoble as those men who went into the priesthood only to escape the draft.

Mr. Novak's writing has made me think more deeply about the issue than anything I have ever read. . . .

Charlotte Smith
Toledo, OH

I deeply appreciated Mr. Novak's beautifully written article and had hoped to find some reason therein to accept his statements regarding a male-only priesthood. However, Mr. Novak writes from his academic understanding and undoubtedly from his own experience. The difficulty with that point of view is that it falls so pitifully short of understanding the needs of women. . . . Most pitiful of all is Mr. Novak's need to [polemicize] against feminism rather than asking how it came about.

In 1986, I completed a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology at Antioch University in Santa Barbara, California. During my training I had a three-year internship with the Rape Crisis Center. I also co-facilitated a survivor group at Calm House for adults abused as children. In both contexts, I was astounded to encounter woman after woman who had been abused by fathers, uncles, grandfathers, priests, and pastors. . . . I knew that I had to find language to communicate to these young women a love that existed in a father that would *never* abuse them. . . .

There is a group called WOMENCHURCH which met in Albuquerque, New Mexico this spring. I did not attend. There was dancing, offerings to the "Goddess," whoever that is, lesbian ceremonies, and various rituals that broken women participated in because the male church has not had the health, the foresight, or just plain love to extend a hand to women so the hurt can begin to be healed. I don't participate because Jesus is nowhere in sight and I know from my own personal experience that He *is* the way, truth, and life.

Broken women *need* women priests . . . women priests who know Jesus, not goddesses and resurrected pagan excuses for ritualized foolishness. Men are too toxic for the badly damaged woman. Women need to see Jesus in other women. . . .

Mr. Novak says that the priesthood is a profound mystery. I couldn't agree more. It is as much privilege as penance. I personally don't believe that women deserve this particular penance, but I do believe

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that Christ in His wisdom is creating women priests to minister to women. I hope that men lose their huge attachment to this "male" tradition and find enough heart to invite women into a needed ministry.

Jan Curtis
Andover, MA

Please accept herewith a footnote to Michael Novak's most interesting and informative article. Not least among the fleshly attributes of human beings is genetic makeup. It is well known that men carry both the X ("feminine") and Y ("masculine") chromosomes, whereas women carry only the X. So in a certain sense a man represents both male and female, but a woman does not. The myth of Adam's rib will not work the other way: Adam could not be created from Eve's rib. It seems to me that the biological facts stress the importance of a male God, a male Savior, and a male priesthood. . . .

Robert C. Tompkins
Towson, MD

I was disappointed in Michael Novak's rambling and sometimes obscure article against women's ordination. I remember his writings from the late 1960s, when he seemed to be on the cutting edge of reform and renewal. Now he seems to be on the blunt edge of tradition and stagnation.

As I understood his article, he seemed to make three major arguments against women's ordination. First, he seemed to be saying that gender differentiation is built into God's revelation to humans and His continuing presence in the eucharistic sacrifice. Furthermore, a male redeemer and priesthood has a greater appeal to and a leavening effect upon men than would be the case if Christ and priests were female. However, this is really a nonargument. As Novak himself points out, God could not appear as "a Person"; He had to be either male or female. Had He been incarnated as a woman, the same case could have been made in reverse, thus rendering a gender-specific priesthood necessary. It is far more parsimonious to view the relationship of Christ and His Church as husband and wife as metaphorical, couched in language that would be easily grasped. In addition, the supposedly masculine appeal of a male redeemer and male priests isn't really a theological argument at all; it is merely sociological. In any event, it doesn't seem to have worked. In many parts of the world Christianity is seen as a religion for women and children.

Mr. Novak's second argument seems to be that if women's ordination were desirable, it would already have been done. This "logic" would foreclose all change; by the same reasoning, the ending of the Friday fast (which likewise had centuries of tradition behind it) should not have been made.

His third argument seems to be that if women were to be ordained now, it would imply that the Catholic Church has been sexist and oppressive all along. The implications of this are quite simply incredible! Should any organization (or person) be afraid to admit an error? Should the Church have continued its condemnation of Galileo on the grounds that admitting the earth revolved around the sun would cause people to lose faith in its teachings? Institutions and individuals demonstrate a greater maturity and integrity by admitting error than by stubbornly clinging to an outdated epistemology.

I appreciate Mr. Novak's attempt to find theological reasons for the continuation of the all-male priesthood. I just don't think he has done it. His reasons in the end seem to be sociological and political, with a theological veneer.

E. Thomas Dowd
Akron, OH

Mr. Novak doesn't have "fundamental theological reasons" for his argument that women shouldn't be ordained, though one could agree with many of his lesser points. The Catholic Church has already shown a willingness to introduce departures from precedent and its own traditions—for example in its elevation of Mary—for which the New Testament presents scant evidence. So that isn't the problem. The fact is that Novak in particular and the Roman Catholic Church in general have a cultural and social preference against women pastors. . . .

Yes, there will continue to be genetic differences between men and women, but this is no theological justification for withholding ordination from either men or women. And while the genetic and cultural argument is being made, you might just as well argue that blacks or Asians should be denied ordination because Jesus didn't have any of them as his disciples. . . .

Kurt Hoeksema
Chicago, IL

Michael Novak's article attempts to suggest reasons why women should not be ordained priests. His reasons create more difficulties for an already volatile issue. Some of the problems are:

(1) As Mr. Novak makes clear, "being Spirit, God has no gender and is properly spoken of neither as male nor as female." And yet, Scripture and Tradition use gender-specific words to speak of, about, and to the Almighty. Why? Because God is the ineffable reality which can never be completely grasped by finite human speech. Religious/liturgical language is a language of symbol and metaphor that makes it possible to express the reality and presence of God, discuss God in an intelligible manner, and finally, voice the praise and gratitude of the Church.

Mr. Novak confuses God with the metaphors about God, and then proceeds to identify God with the metaphors. Once in this trap, God becomes anthropomorphized. The assertion then follows that there are male characteristics in God, which contradicts Mr. Novak's own observation that there is no gender in God.

God is eternal and unchanging, yet the symbols, language, and metaphors used by the Church to express God are subject to the vicissitudes of history and culture. The symbols, language, and metaphors used to voice the mystery which is

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God will change as history and culture continue to change. . . .

(2) Mr. Novak restricts his discussion to the question of admission of women to the office of priest (and presumably, a fortiori, the office of bishop). This restriction is necessary, for in Catholic sacramental theology women may, at present, administer two sacraments. In marriage, the man and the woman are the ministers of the sacrament. In the case of an emergency, a woman may baptize, as St. Thomas argues in his *Summa.* The office of deacon is not mentioned in Mr. Novak's article, nor in the *Declaration on Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* of October 15, 1976, issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. This silence would signify serious debate as to whether women should be ordained to the office of deacon, an integral part of Holy Orders. It is worth noting that the Orthodox Churches have addressed the question of women and ordination. The office of the Ecumenical Patriarchate issued the *Conclusions of the Inter-Orthodox Consultation of Women and the Question of Ordination* in 1988. This document, while stating the impossibility of ordaining women to the priesthood, calls for the revival of the "apostolic order of deaconesses," which "was never altogether abandoned in the Orthodox Church though it has tended to fall into disuse."

(3) Mr. Novak does not use the term *in persona Christi,* but he alludes to it time and time again. This phrase is at the heart of the *Declaration*'s rationale against women in the priesthood. The *Declaration* states that the priest, acting *in persona Christi* when speaking the words of consecration, must be in the very image of Christ, bearing a natural resemblance to Christ, who was and remains a male. This phrase deserves some attention. St. Thomas uses the phrase several times in discussing the minister of the Holy Eucharist. The question posed by St. Thomas is: How is the sacrament effected? Response: by the person of Christ present in the minister. Thomas uses *in persona Christi* in terms of instrument causality, i.e., God, the principal agent, uses a minister as an instrument to produce the effect of the sacrament.

St. Thomas explicitly poses the question whether the female sex is an impediment to the reception of the Holy Orders. A woman may not receive the sacrament of Holy Orders because a female fails to signify the *eminence of degree* necessary for Orders (emphasis added). Thomas understood well that the priest was a sign of Christ. But for Thomas, a woman could not be a priest because she could not be recognized as one who could exercise jurisdiction over a man.

This obscure and little known phrase *in persona Christi,* seldom used in nineteen countries, is used with great frequency in the last two decades. The current usage, however, occurs with a major shift in use and interpretation. Thomas' use of a term to describe sacramental causality has been taken to require, in the priest speaking the words of consecration, a physical imaging of Christ. This transition remains unexamined and unexplained. Some critical reflection would be helpful in the use of this phrase.

(4) That Jesus was a male is not in question. The question is: Is there a necessary and constitutive character of Jesus as a male in his role as revealer of the kingdom of God or as savior? Mr Novak's literalization of metaphors apparently leads him to respond in the affirmative. For example, does the teaching of Jesus that God is our Father tell us of male characteristics in God, or is the revelation of God as Father, or more precisely, "Abba" (Romans 8:15), an attempt to use *our* language to assist our comprehension of the intimate and overwhelming love of God in a manner we can understand? Mr. Novak's article simply fuels the feminist argument that Christianity is a patriarchial religion, seeing God as a male and therefore assuming that the human male is superior and the human female subordinate to the male. The question then arises as to whether this is consistent with Christian theology and Christian anthropology. What is certain is that the debate will continue.

(The Rev.) Michael Wakefield
Holy Family Church
South Pasadena, CA

Michael Novak's piece on ordaining women was good but could have been better. As an M.Div. student at Asbury Theological Seminary, I am in a distinct minority in my reluctance to affirm women's ordination. I have encountered the argument, "If a man represents Christ better than a woman, why don't we require ministers to be Jewish carpenters? Wouldn't they represent Christ best of all?" Mr. Novak's distinction between that which is essential and circumstantial to humanity was very helpful.

Mr. Novak's concern about "angelism" is also well taken. As a recent issue of *Christianity Today* describes, angels are "in." This faddish interest in angels is often accompanied by a blurring of distinctions between what is human and what is divine.

But it is at this point, I think, that Mr. Novak missed the most powerful argument against women's ordination. Women should not be priests or preachers because the image of a feminine God, which is the necessary result, is much more likely to lend itself to paganized worship and religion. The modern renascence of angelism shows us that the ancient biblical emphasis on transcendence requires undeviating affirmation. Pagan forms of religion are seductive. How alluring to believe we can manipulate the gods, the forces of the universe. How piquant the notion that all that is god is human, and all that is human is god. What freedom from restrictive authority and absolute ethics. . . .

How does a feminine view of God lend itself to this mythic worldview? If God is viewed in the female gender, the biblical distinctions between humanity and God are necessarily blurred. God as a male creates the world by his power. He fashions humans from the dust of the earth. God as a woman gives birth to the cosmos

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by copulation, and demands a consort. If God gave birth to us, and is our Mother, then we lived in her loins for a time. We are her children in a way that makes us god-like, a pagan apotheosis. This is the stuff of myth, a worldview that is alive and well.

Certainly we deny all nonsense about God being genetically male. These problems are endemic to human speech, and are the result of very limited options. But if we are to hold on to biblical religion, we do well lovingly to deny the priestess and her god. I say this being committed with my whole soul to all that promotes the welfare of women. I am a feminist of sorts. But how interesting it is that the denominations that are frenetic about women's ordination are also unable to stem the rising tide of syncretism.

Joel Allen
Wilmore, KY

I write to congratulate Michael Novak for his cogently argued, indeed definitive, demonstration that ordination of women as priests would be theologically heretical and disastrously dangerous for the entire future of the Church. Mr. Novak, however, only comes close to articulating what I think is the most important single argument in this regard, namely what might be called the "iconicity" of the priesthood, although the concept is certainly implied in his article. A thorough presentation of this idea might start with St. John of Damascus' great *Defense of the Holy Icons*. St. John (?675-749) was arguing against the Iconoclasts who had insisted on the removal of icons from the churches. He actually describes Christ Himself as an "icon" (image) of the Father: "The Son of the Father is the first natural and precisely similar image of the invisible God, for He reveals the Father in His own person. . . . The Son is the natural image of the Father, precisely similar to the Father in every way. . . ."

It follows that the priest is a *living icon* of Christ, the first priest, who embodies the essential elements of Christ's incarnate humanity in all its precious specificity, including of course maleness. . . .

Jonathan Chaves
Washington, D.C.

. . . If I understand my life as a Catholic woman correctly, my central goal is to draw ever more close to God and to ever more perfectly carry out His will. If I am making any progress, I should notice how compelling God is in this approach. With every step, I should be more acutely aware that the only reasons I can even think about making this approach are His generosity and incomprehensible goodness. It has nothing to do with any adornments that I have succeeded in adding to myself.

Our earthly notions of self-enhancement, such as adding to our credentials—either as a man or as a woman—the sacramental mark of the priesthood, are not necessary. What God wishes from us, and the only thing that we have the ability to give to Him, is [the obedience of] our free will. The blessedness that we hope to enjoy with God in eternity will radiate from Him, not from some "value added" that we fancy ourselves as being able to display.

For a priest, the "value added" is not as an achievement, sought after and acquired by him, but that this priesthood was God's will for him, and that, bending to that will, he carried out this vocation to the best of his ability.

Constance M. Manning
Portland, OR

Michael Novak claims that Jesus' maleness, coupled with "male" trinitarian imagery, signals that Jesus' gender must be constitutive in the life and ministry of the Church. At one point Mr. Novak properly notes that God is genderless. What he fails to see, however, is that by making such a big deal of Jesus' gender and by taking trinitarian God-talk beyond metaphor, he has in fact imported gender distinction into the Godhead.

But this move is surely as mistaken as feminists who import female sexuality into a God(dess) who "births" Creation. This would also make it precious difficult to maintain the teaching that both males and females image God with neither gender "looking" more or less like God than the other.

And anyway, nowhere in the Bible is Jesus' gender made an issue, not even in those two or three "women must be silent" passages. While, as Novak says, gender is essential and not accidental to human existence, the Bible goes out of its way to emphasize that when it comes to being "in Christ," gender *is* in fact accidental. Presumably, therefore, Jesus' gender was likewise accidental in the *effecting* of that salvation.

Thus, traditional atonement doctrine finds no saving significance in the maleness of Jesus but only in his being *vere homo*. To suggest that the atonement turns mostly on *male* human flesh is to say something that Scripture nowhere hints at. To assert that it is principally *male* flesh and blood in the Eucharist scandalously suggests that there is something about maleness that effected atonement in a way spilled female blood could not have. Indeed, how would Mr. Novak's argument look if one added that the Host represents male, *Caucasian* flesh?

Throughout his essay Mr. Novak properly asserts that if women are to become ministers or priests, then we need cogent *theological* arguments to make this change. Unhappily Novak's article not only fails to mount significant theological points, it even runs roughshod over traditional doctrines on God, humanity, and the atonement.

(The Rev.) Scott Hoezee
Second Christian Reformed Church
Fremont, MI

I enjoy your publication very much, but I must respectfully object to Michael Novak's "Women, Ordination, and Angels." No complaint with Mr. Novak's intentions or the interesting theological points he eloquently makes, but in my opinion he misses the only real reason for male priests or ministers: God said so (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:12).

Perhaps this is so obvious that it's not worth mentioning. Except that today it is common to think of the

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church as a democracy or debate club and not what it really is, a monarchy whose King demands complete obedience.

I appreciate that Mr. Novak wants to persuade gently, and there is wisdom in his approach, but he undermines his own arguments with statements like, "God does continue to lead and to guide His Church by the path of theological debate, reflection, and intellectual inquiry. He did so regarding various doctrines bearing on the role of one woman, the Mother of God, to name but one example, as in the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption."

Appealing to these controversial doctrines, which are not grounded in Scripture nor accepted by the church universal, Mr. Novak gives unwitting aid to those who want to redefine Christianity to today's norms. . . .

Robert Ditmars
Mt. Vernon, OH

Michael Novak's "Women, Ordination, and Angels" develops well from its premises; unfortunately, I find its premises to be flawed.

Mr. Novak identifies examples of women of God but denies that they can serve as priests, representatives of Christ. By demonstrating the significance of a history of andromorphic revelation and a physical incarnation he thus opposes the feminist position. (I am always suspicious of statements of "the feminist position" if only because there is no single feminist position.)

His statement of this position, however, which asserts that "whether a priest is male or female makes no difference; gender is simply irrelevant," is somewhat of a straw man and does not do justice to those who favor the ordination of women. Clearly gender makes a difference but it is faulty to conclude that it disables one gender from mediating the presence of God. There are racial and other differences that might arise here, but we still ordain non-Jews (and non-carpenters). . . .

Mr. Novak's response to this argument is that gender is "of the essence of being human" whereas race or profession is "only an accident of culture or circumstance." Whether race is any less central to one's humanity than gender is questionable, but, more importantly, Mr. Novak has improperly equated the importance of elements of human identity (gender, race, profession) with how they have been formed. Yes, gender is certainly central to one's definition of one's self but it is no less "accidental" than race or profession; indeed, gender is entirely dependent on which sperm, among millions, happens to be in the right place at the right time. . . .

Colin Rowat
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada

Michael Novak has done an excellent job of laying the theological foundations for an all-male Catholic priesthood. But if we really wish to get theological about God's alleged male chauvinism, we could do worse than to recur to the original creative intent. "God who made you without you," wrote Augustine, "cannot consummate his love for you without you." It's not enough to analyze the nature of the Christian priesthood; rather, we must ask in the service of what relationship God established the instrumental priesthood.

The initiative in what God hopes will become a bilateral relationship is strictly and unremittingly divine. God loves us into existence without our bidding, only so that we may assent to his unendingly enriching our being. For nothing less is meant by our being the conscious and freely welcoming objective of divine love. God thus seeks to ravish us with the super-exuberant excess of his prodigal self-giving. Now that unconditional, gratuitous reality of God's constitutive love surely makes him our suitor par excellence. Man or woman, we all, vis-à-vis God, play a receptive, expectant, feminine role. God is the only active one.

If God is thus all-male in his romancing us, won't he most fittingly appoint only men to be his official, earthly refractors and representatives? Wholly inadequate though these men be, to the extent that they actualize both the engifted divine life and the genuine content of their native masculinity, won't they better betoken the divine courtship than women ever could? That's not to derogate femininity—on the contrary. In the game of creation and salvation, all of us succeed as Christians only to the extent that we femininely conform to our non-originating status and let God do his transforming thing. The whole suspense is whether we'll be receptive to the divine overtures. The additional burden laid on priests with ordination is that these mere men are also called to reflect, in however diminished and unworthy a manner, God's loving energy and enterprise in humanity's regard. Once one thus understands this specifically priestly role, no one in his right mind would take it upon himself to play God to humanity. Priests are much more to be pitied and prayed for than to be envied. Christ so loved his mother, all women, and all men not called to orders that he spared them the added burden of officially mediating God to humanity. . . .

Dennis Helming
Washington, D.C.

I found Michael Novak's article interesting and challenging, but not always convincing. I agree that gender is important, but for different reasons than he does. His statement, "Made in His image as we are, it is through complementarity as male and female that we piece together such fragments of His reality as we are vouchsafed to know," brings into focus one reason why the Church needs women priests. The all-male presence at the altar leaves out the female dimension, and so only partially mirrors the divine. It is my view that in Christ is the fullness of male and female without distinction. "All are one in Christ" (Galatians 3:27-28). We see the so-called male traits manifested in His courage, strength, and power, and the so-called female traits in His compassion, gentleness, and meekness. We know that men and women show varying degrees of overlapping male and female traits, and Christ, the perfect man and true God, contained in His male nature

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the divine source of both. . . .

Eleanor Merrick
Bay Head, NJ

Thanks to Michael Novak for an interesting and enlightening treatise on the question of ordination of women in the Catholic Church. His exposition of why in human terms the ordination of women must be considered, at least for now, unacceptable is extremely persuasive, but I think he falters miserably in his attempt to create a theology against the proposition that women should be ordained priests. . . .

I agree with Mr. Novak that the Catholic Church cannot be trendy or abandon its position because of social pressure or indeed because of the fundamental equality of the sexes before God. The Church has a mission from Christ Himself to go and teach all nations. If one pictures the world today with Arabs, Hindus, and Chinese alone, it has a huge number of people who do not accept female equality, and to those people a male and female priesthood would surely be a serious obstacle. Actually, I don't think we have to go that far afield. Men in general do not like to take instruction from anyone and particularly from women.

Like it or not, that's the way the world is, and I think the Church would be wrong to take the step of ordaining women at the risk of its mission. It is wronger still for those of us who are the heirs of almost 2,000 years of Christianity to insist that personal aims and goals be promoted without regard to tradition and, more profoundly, to sociological and psychological realities, some of which are today being ignored in the secular life of this country, possibly to its peril.

Where Mr. Novak errs, I think, is in extending the use of logic to explain the ways of the Lord, from which one must conclude that God, if not an Englishman, is surely male. While Mr. Novak correctly denies this at one point, he marches straight into the error of stating in fact that the self-revelation of God in the doctrine of the Trinity is male "Father," male "Son," and male "Holy Spirit." However, to be equally logical Mr. Novak must answer the question: If mankind is created in the image and likeness of God and is created male and female, where is the female in God? I am certainly not a student of theology, but it seems to me that the concept of maleness (and femaleness) is one of limitation and God cannot by definition be ascribed any such limitation. . . .

Therefore, while I am persuaded that, at least as of today, women should not be ordained, I think Mr. Novak's theology is just plain wrong.

Katherine M. Griffin
San Francisco, CA

Michael Novak is correct that a genuinely theological approach has been lacking in the debates over the ordination of women to the priesthood or ordained ministry. After several decades of discussion the argument against the ordination of women rests primarily on statements from the Scriptures and the cumulative witness of tradition. These are weighty considerations, yet Christian theology has seldom been satisfied with "unjustified law." The inquiring mind, as Mr. Novak observes, is restless until it comes to understand *why*. Mr. Novak, however, is too interested in scoring points in the cultural wars to advance the theological discussion. His views, especially on "maleness" in the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, are ill-advised and shortsighted.

Mr. Novak believes that the ordination of males to the priesthood can be deduced from fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. "Under the conditions of human flesh and actual history, it is a more accurate sign of the interior life of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, and of the relation of Christ to His people if the priest is clearly differentiated and selected as a male rather than as a female. . . ." Because Christians speak of the first and second persons of the Trinity as "Father" and "Son," so the argument goes, a male priesthood is a sign of the life of the Trinity. This is sheer speculation without foundation in Christian tradition. In the creed when we confess that the Son was "begotten from the Father before all ages," the term Son has nothing to do with maleness, or even with being human. The metaphor of Father and Son is a way of speaking of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. The terms signify a relation that exists within God (*opera ad intra*), and as the church fathers remind us, when speaking of God, "father" no more signifies male than "mother" would female, "for there is neither male nor female in God" (Gregory of Nyssa).

Similar difficulties arise with respect to the doctrine of the Incarnation which, according to Mr. Novak, has implications for the priesthood. Here the matter is a bit more complicated because Christ was a male, and it is essential to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation (as Mr. Novak rightly recognizes) to assert that uncompromisingly. Any effort to fudge this point easily slips into gnosticism. But it is quite another matter to see Christ's "maleness" as evidence of divine intention regarding the priesthood, or to assert that "gender differentiation" in the Incarnation was part of "God's deliberate will."

Mr. Novak cites Philippians 2, "God . . . humbled Himself, becoming man" (the text actually reads "Christ Jesus . . . being found in the form of a man, humbled himself . . ."), to argue that in the Incarnation God had to choose whether to become male or female and he chose male. Philippians 2, in this reading, teaches that gender differentiation is significant for the self-revelation of God in history. But that is to misuse the text. Mr. Novak surely knows that the term translated man (*anthropos*) does not mean "male." The contrast Paul draws is not between becoming male or female, but between God and man, i.e., remaining in the form of God and becoming man. Philippians 2 must be read, as it has been read in Christian tradition, with John 1: "And the Word became flesh . . ."

Here as elsewhere Mr. Novak, surprisingly for a philosopher, is fond of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* arguments. He writes: "He could have come in fe-

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male flesh but did not," or he "could have overawed humanity," but did not. On this basis Novak claims to discern the divine intention. *Because* God becomes flesh in a male human being, and *because* the apostles were all male, a male priesthood was part of the divine plan. "The choice [to ordain only men] was made from all eternity." Perhaps, but how can we know? It is not, I think, pedantic to insist that only when the Scriptures actually speak of God's intention (e.g., "God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world" [Ephesians 1:4]) can we claim to know God's intention.

It is worth recalling that other Christian thinkers have discerned God's intention quite differently. There is a very ancient, and very orthodox, Christian tradition (reflected in the Cappadocians, Maximus the Confessor, et al.) that the division of humankind into male and female ("male and female he made them") is not part of the divine plan. Since God is not defined by gender, they argued, when the Scripture says that human beings were created "in God's image," that cannot include gender. St. Maximus writes: Christ "frees the whole of nature from the attributes of male and female, which are in no way dependent . . . on the divine purpose concerning the generation of man [*anthropos*]. It thus becomes clear that, according to this divine purpose, man was not intended to be divided into the categories of male and female, as is now the case; and that by acquiring perfect knowledge of the inner principles according to which he exists he may transcend this division." Whether one agrees with this view or not, it is apparent that God's intentions are not as self-evident as Mr. Novak believes.

Some of Mr. Novak's other opinions are even more speculative than those on the Trinity and the Incarnation. He mentions the election of Israel to show that God is not egalitarian in dealing with human beings. God singled out one people, he writes, and gave them a unique role in the history of salvation, and in every generation God elects His own. Then he asks: If this is true of our salvation, why should it be surprising regarding the priesthood? This is not an argument. We know of the election of Israel and of Christians on the basis of explicit passages in the Scriptures that say as much. There are no such passages in the Scriptures about the priesthood; consequently, we have no warrant to apply the doctrine of election to this area of Christian life. The Scriptures mention the election of individual persons as prophets and apostles, Jeremiah or St. Paul, but that is another matter entirely. And of course it must be remembered that God did on occasion call women to be prophets, witness Deborah.

Finally, although Mr. Novak wants to take the Incarnation with complete seriousness, and insists that Christianity is a religion for "embodied persons," people who occupy space and whose lives extend over time, his approach to Christian teaching and practice is thoroughly unhistorical. We have learned a few things about early Christian history over the last two hundred years, one of which is that the priesthood did not come into the world full-blown. Like many other things that Christians hold dear, the traditional Christian ministry is the result of decades, even generations, of development. Only in the course of time and a period of testing did it take the form that we recognize. I say this not to assert that all things are relative, as though we cannot say anything definite about the priesthood. I only wish to emphasize that debate about the character of the Christian ministry cannot proceed as though the office of priest or bishop has no history. It does not advance the discussion to justify the traditional practice by appeals to timeless notions of divine intention without consideration of the nature of the office and its history.

Robert L. Wilken
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA

Michael Novak replies:

Many thanks to Charlotte Smith, Robert C. Tompkins, Joel Allen, Jonathan Chaves, Constance M. Manning, Dennis Helming, Eleanor Merrick, and Katherine M. Griffin for the degree of support they express for my arguments, for the kindness of the manner in which they disagree on some points, and for helpful additions or corrections.

Jan Curtis, E. Thomas Dowd, Kurt Hoeksema, Michael Wakefield, Scott Hoezee, Robert Ditmars, Colin Rowat, and Robert L. Wilken, however, raise a number of sharp objections, mostly rather less cutting than I had anticipated. To all, my thanks for posing good questions. To reply to everything would require nearly another article.

If Thomas Dowd thinks that my intelligence and heart are now on "the blunt edge of tradition and stagnation," he should be disabused by the letter of Robert Ditmars.

To Mr. Ditmars: Rome itself has pointed to "fundamental theological reasons" for its interpretation of Christ's teaching; it has by no means rested its case on naked authority.

Jan Curtis perfectly exemplifies the sort of "heart" and good faith that are, with other signs, the marks of Christ's indwelling in every believer; may her work prosper. For counselling those she singles out for her apostolate, other women may indeed have a privileged role to play. But part of the wound she describes, it would seem, requires reconciliation between male and female.

Several correspondents fail to grasp the argument I am making about God's use (in Scripture) of metaphors rooted in gender ("Father," "Son," etc.). That these metaphors do not characterize God, Who is neither male nor female, and that these metaphors are used to meet human necessities, are two commonplaces fixed firmly in my mind. From these (*contra* Robert Wilken), I "deduce" nothing. But they do set my mind to wondering. Why did God make gender? What does gender tell us about how to approach our Maker?

God does not have gender, but when humans are taught by God to address Him as "Father" rather than as "Mother," something significant about ourselves and our best ap-

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proach to God may be at stake. Approaching God as we have been instructed to do by God may also be significant across the ages—and even more significant today, precisely because (in some places) it rubs against the modern grain.

From agreement on that (if any) to reasons for the male priesthood is another long leap. The most I argue for is "fittingness" or "congruence." I do not pretend to be privy to God's unrevealed intentions.

Professor Wilken should be assured that, while I am not a historian (I depend on such as he), an argument like mine addresses the dilemma that we all face under today's pressure for a "development of doctrine" that may be false or may be true. We have to choose during our brief lifetime which side of the argument to support, not knowing how the story will come out. For the reasons stated (the "speculations" if you will, a sense of "fittingness"), I have made my choice.

I could be wrong; but there is comfort in standing with Peter.

To Test or Not to Test

Elizabeth Kristol's article on prenatal testing ("Picture Perfect: The Politics of Prenatal Testing," April) made much of adverse psychological sequelae to late-second-trimester abortions, but she overlooked the sequelae to birth of a seriously defective child. At least prenatal testing allows a woman or a couple the opportunity to make a reasoned choice about the future of her/their family. Is ignorance really preferable to knowledge?

Elizabeth Randall
Aspen Hill, MD

Elizabeth Kristol gives excellent treatment to the moral questions associated with prenatal testing. The pressures she describes are all too real. In 1991, while I was pregnant with my daughter, Helen, I was urged to undergo routine prenatal tests, which (as I am a young woman) consisted of an Alphafetoprotein screening at seventeen weeks gestation.

When discussing the procedure with my husband and me, the medical staff never used the word abortion. They stressed the "peace of mind" that the test would bring, since almost all are normal. They then explained how most abnormal results turn out to be normal but require further testing. This ordeal is supposed to bring couples peace of mind?

What is most striking is that even after I informed the nurse that we would not consider killing our baby for any reason, she still urged the test as a way of "preparing" for a disabled child. In the end I submitted to the test, though I wondered why. The results were normal and I gave birth to a healthy baby girl.

How does one prepare to give birth to a child with a disability such as Down's Syndrome? It seems to me that such knowledge would cause nothing but stress and grief (which doctors could manipulate to encourage abortion), culminating in a birth experience that focused not on the beautiful new life but on the emotions of the parents. Would we anticipate her birth with joy? Would we love our unborn child, knowing she would be disabled? In times of financial and emotional weakness, would we be able to keep from secretly wishing we had aborted her? I'd like to be able to say with confidence that we would have, but then, I know that we are far from perfect.

All parents experience doubts about their ability to raise a child successfully, to love unconditionally, and to sacrifice supremely, but is it really helpful to the parents and fair to the infant to bring about these feelings before the child is even born? In a moment of extreme weakness and selfishness, we could have despaired greatly and taken the (seemingly) easy way—the way of death. I believe some people in the medical establishment know that and count on it. But then, to those who see no inherent value in human life, the death of a "defective" baby is a net gain to society. . . .

We never know what we are capable of until we are called upon to do it. When given the opportunity to choose, we will often take the easier path. And while parents used to exist to meet the needs of their children, children now seem increasingly to exist to satisfy their needy parents as they search for fulfillment through "the experience of parenting." This is but one way in which the rhetoric of choice is whittling away at time-honored notions of honor, duty, and sacrifice. Choice as the ultimate goal for the individual destroys families, offering up children, the elderly, and the sick as the cost of self-fulfillment, self-knowledge, and self-love. . . .

Kate Patterson
Durham, NC

Having borne, in recent years, four children at an "advanced maternal age," I am well-acquainted with the politics of prenatal testing, as surveyed by Elizabeth Kristol.

I've had my quota of sonograms, including one pressed upon me in late pregnancy for the purpose of determining birth weight, a thing it is notoriously poor at doing. (My projected 9 lb.-plus baby weighed in at a trim 7 lbs. 11 oz.) I submitted to the AFP blood test once, out of sheer bewilderment, though it accomplished little more than to leave a hole in my arm and pocketbook. The lab, devoted exclusively to genetic testing, was lavishly appointed.

Amniocentesis I cheerfully refused and was rewarded with sniffs and forms to sign to the effect that I had been advised of this and that. There was little comprehension that parents prepared to accept their child unconditionally are the least likely to take their doctor to court for undiagnosed genetic defects.

We have, praise God, four normal, albeit whiney, children, and are constantly rewarded to know that we would have pursued enough grace to accept them in whatever state they came. Our society, regrettably, would discourage us from this very thing, of embracing our neediest members, so that ultimately our greatest opportunity to be Christ-like is stolen from us.

Deborah Binnie
South Miami, FL

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Homosexuality and Family Values

Linda Chavez's "Homosexuality and the Moral Order" (April) falls into the all-too-common genre of articles which postulate that homosexuality is a "threat to family values." The phrase is supposed to define itself. Often, as does she, the author lumps in some other threats, i.e., incest and adultery. But rarely is there an attempt to be more specific about how homosexuality is equated with these two obvious violations of either vowed fidelity or moral and legal responsibility of the adult for the child's well-being. Somehow a sibling or child who enters into a same-sex relationship, or avers a same-sex orientation, is equal in opprobrium to those who cheat on or take advantage of a loved one. But the correlation is drawn without specific argumentation in support of inclusion within this laundry list of threats.

I find it particularly odd that the traditional family structure is so fragile that the *mere existence* of an alternative form of family, such as the same-sex couple, or the extended chosen family network, is a threat to its very continuation. What has happened to the power of love and commitment among siblings and between parent and child as a bonding force? Experience teaches that, if this traditional structure is weakened because of a member's lesbianism or homosexuality, it is done so because of *rejection of the homosexual member by the heterosexual majority*, and not vice versa. It is not the homosexual who generally rends the family structure, but the heterosexual members. Is it therefore right or fair to place the blame on the victim rather than the victimizers?

Another situation described by Ms. Chavez would be exceedingly laughable if it were not so cruel, i.e., her denigration of the overly emphasized shortcomings of many male homosexuals and their "promiscuous" lifestyle. This lifestyle that she finds so very pernicious is all that she and like-minded supporters will "allow." With all of the social structures that have been established to solidify, recognize, support, and maintain traditional marriages, the failure rate of heterosexual marriages is phenomenally high. Who knows how many of the surviving marriages are simply shams, with either or both parties participating in extramarital sexual assignations? Is it any wonder that same-sex relationships which enjoy *none* of the "respectable" social-support systems, including legal and ecclesiastical recognition and encouragement, have a track record that is no more successful? The recent uncovering of the high school "Spur Posse" in a suburb of Los Angeles drastically weakens the larger society's shibboleth of homosexual promiscuity being exponentially worse than that of heterosexuals. Ms. Chavez's cynical construct of homosexuality as "properly defined by behavior" and her subsequent unwillingness to "legitimate that behavior" is nothing more than a thinly veiled method of setting up relationships, already buffeted on all sides, for failure.

The mind boggles at her contention that a danger of socially tolerated homosexuality is that "[a] great many people will decide that fidelity and child-rearing require too much sacrifice and denial and will simply abandon both duties when they have been stripped of the special honor with which our traditional moral code invests them. It is this fear . . . that makes so many of us indisposed to eliminate yet another sexual taboo." If she worries that people will leap into homosexuality because of an unwillingness to accept the burdens of marital fidelity and child-rearing, she obviously has a naive understanding of the burdens of accepting one's homosexuality with its consequent and all-pervasive social disadvantages.

Lastly, I vehemently protest the invidious implication of her statement that "about one-third of recorded instances of child molestation involve male sodomy." The insinuation is that these despicable acts are being committed by homosexual males. There are no reliable statistics to support that implication. On the contrary, there are now decades of studies which have discovered that the overwhelmingly predominant perpetration of child molestation (as well as homosexual-style rape in prisons) is by the *heterosexual* male.

Jim McCrea
Piedmont, CA

Linda Chavez replies:

Mr. McCrae's vehement protests notwithstanding, literally dozens of studies of child molestation in the United States, Canada, England, and elsewhere reveal that from one-fifth to more than one-third of all cases involve boys who have been sodomized by an adult male. While there are studies that show that homosexuals are no more likely to molest children than heterosexuals are, many of these reach their conclusion by redefining molestation as a consensual act when it involves sodomy between an adult male and an adolescent boy. In "Homosexual Behavior and Child Molestation: A Review of the Evidence" (*Adolescence*, Spring 1978), David E. Newton offered the comforting conclusion that since the average age of molested girls is in the range of six to eleven years but that of boys is in the twelve to fifteen year range, the boys were much more likely to be "active and willing participant[s]." Another research team hoping to disprove any link between homosexuality and pedophilia noted that homosexuals convicted of child molestation "seek out adolescents, but if these are unavailable at the moment, they will turn toward pre-adolescents." (P. Gebhard, et al., *Sex Offenders*, 1965)

It is interesting that Mr. McCrae cites the recent case of a group of promiscuous California teenagers who used sex in their initiation rites into their "Spur Posse" as evidence that the degree of heterosexual promiscuity is the same as male homosexual promiscuity. Indeed, one of the boys in the group claims to have had sex with sixty-seven different girls, another forty-four. But this level of promiscuity among heterosexual teenagers is shocking enough to warrant national television coverage, whereas more than 80 percent of all male homosexuals claim to have had more than fifty different part-

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ners in their lifetime, 28 percent claim 1,000 or more partners, and 79 percent claim that more than half of their partners were strangers (*Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women*, 1978).

The legitimation of sex for its own sake, with no procreative or transcendent purpose beyond pleasure, is at the heart of the homosexual movement. As homosexual writer Frank Browning admits, it is "absurd to claim that sex is merely ancillary to the gay male agenda." I don't fear that most people will "leap into homosexuality" if this taboo is lifted, but I do fear that the already tenuous link between sex and marriage—and thus the basis for the family—will be further weakened. Yes, Mr. McCrae, the traditional family is a fragile institution. One in five children is born out of wedlock in the U.S. currently; among blacks this figure is two out of three. Nor is this a uniquely American phenomenon. In sexually permissive Sweden, 52 percent of children are born out of wedlock; in Denmark, the figure is 46 percent. The fact that these countries have virtually no social taboos against homosexuality obviously doesn't *cause* their high illegitimacy rates—but their permissive sexual attitudes, in fact, encourage both homosexuality and illegitimacy to flourish, to the detriment of the family.

The Euthanasia Threat

I deeply appreciate your comments on my recent talk regarding euthanasia and Nazi medicine (Public Square, May).

Corrections: The Public Square section of the June-July issue stated that *Crisis* magazine is twenty-one years old. *Crisis* was launched in 1982. It also said that the homosexual subculture includes S clubs and M clubs. That should have read S&M clubs. Finally, "St. Evelyn Waugh" by George Weigel alluded to a person having lunch with "Mrs. Day." Dorothy Day was always Dorothy or Miss Day, never Mrs. Day.

One factual quibble: My story about how Dr. Karl Brandt first became sympathetic to euthanasia is taken not from his own testimony at Nuremberg but from an interview with a former medical colleague of his published in Volume I of Philippe Aziz's book *Doctors of Death* (1976). Brandt said at Nuremberg that his only motive throughout the Nazi euthanasia campaign was "pity for the incurable"—but he did not go into autobiographical detail.

In my talk, I stressed that we must never make overly facile analogies to the Nazis or imply that the present well-meaning proponents of euthanasia are any kind of Nazis. But we must also keep our eyes open, so as not to repeat the mistakes of initially well-meaning people like Dr. Brandt.

For example, I recently attended a talk by the Legal Director of the American Civil Liberties Union, at which he defended the ACLU of Michigan lawsuit designed to have laws against assisted suicide declared unconstitutional. He said that while the suit explicitly refers only to "competent adults," in fact incompetent patients have the same fundamental constitutional "right" to be killed as the competent do; if these patients have never asked for death, others will have to exercise their rights for them after guessing what they *would* have wanted. In one lawsuit, then, our country could authorize both voluntary and nonvoluntary euthanasia for debilitated patients—all in the name of individual freedom of choice.

Richard Doerflinger
Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities
National Conference
of Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

Not Anti-Catholic

I am a Catholic and a member of the Editorial Council of the *Journal of Church and State*, and was surprised and disappointed to see the *Journal* labelled "anti-Catholic" (Public Square, April). The *Journal* is committed to interdisciplinary, interfaith, and international discourse on current and historical issues of church and state, law and theology, and religion and public policy. Over the thirty-five years of its publication, the *Journal* has published a tremendous variety of articles. I invite your readers to read the *Journal*, where they will find precisely what has attracted them to First Things: a strong commitment to ecumenical dialogue and cooperation.

Angela C. Carmella
Newark, NJ

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Opinion

Sparrows and Lilies

Camille S. Williams

When I was pregnant with my first child, I asked my mother about labor. This woman who gave birth to her first on her own kitchen table (her mother and mother-in-law in attendance) hardly looked up from her work to say, "It's not that bad." Though she nearly bled to death after the birth of each of her children, she said little more when I asked for details. She did indicate that the labor was actually harder on my father. I thought she was joking, but he confirmed her account of his dismay at her experience. He decided after the first labor that he could never put her through that again—they should have no more children. As their fifth child, I've always been grateful my mother changed my father's mind.

Dr. Kartchner, trained by the Army in World War II, prepared us first-time parents for labor by explaining that labor was not pain at all—simply pressure. Our son came breech and pale blue into this world after eighteen hours of intense "pressure" at two-minute intervals. Labor is hard enough. Exhausted and relieved, I was not inclined to correct the good doctor as he stitched up the episiotomy, nor was I interested, later on, in contradicting my mother as she taught me how to bathe our child. I'd had firsthand experience of my limits, and it seemed to me that the pain or pressure was sufficient that God might have found a better way of delivering my children.

I was for a time convinced that women were indeed the braver of the race for simply enduring labor through all the millennia it took to bring us Demerol and epidurals. That superiority complex was short-lived; I had not yet felt the dreadful pull to stay at bedside watching writhing pain tear at someone I loved, and praying that God either take away the pain or make me strong enough to bear it, too.

I've glimpsed a bit of what fathers feel at the birth of their children. A coworker, a proud first-time father, modestly acknowledged at lunch one day that he had helped produce the world's most beautiful child. He assured us his wife was recovering nicely, and our talk turned to pregnancy, labor, and birth. He paused mid-sentence, recounting his wife's struggle; he had no words for what he felt. An experienced father of four explained that his first child came only after a very hard labor and significant short-term injury to his wife. "The next day," he said, "I looked at myself and everyone I passed on the street, and said in my heart, *'You did that to your mother!'*" It took him some time to recover from the shock. The fathers round me mumbled agreement about labor's difficulty, shaking their heads and looking away in silent frustration at their own helplessness in the process of birth.

As I listened to what seemed to be their judgment that their respective wives had suffered far more than ought to be necessary, I found myself leaning across the table trying to comfort them. Though I couldn't discount the distress they described, the only words that came to mind were my mother's *"It's not that bad."* What I meant, I suppose, is that those labor pains are not without purpose.

After four labors and one emergency C-section, I have not forgotten the heaviness of the child pressing to be born, but neither do I dismiss natural birthing as superfluous suffering. What is it I think that I have bought by my maternal pains? Certainly my friends who for years hoped for pregnancy, endured medical tests and self-doubt and grief, love their adopted children no less than I love the children of my body. I am also quite sure that there are many ways of learning love other than through offspring, but in my life, along with my parents and my husband, my children have worked a profound change in my ability to care for others.

I am forever altered by the carrying and the laboring for my children. Slow learner that I am, it took the birth of my first child to see each person as someone else's child, someone else's pain and joy. This radical restructuring of my world left me unable to bear some of the misery we inflict on each other. Whether real or simulated, I cannot watch the maiming or killing of anyone's child, no matter the age.

This could be sentimentality, but I prefer to think that in that relatively short time when body and soul are straining to bring forth the daughter or the son, some of us grasp for the first time that each irreplaceable life requires faith, patience, and more pain than any of us would choose. Labor gives life, and the long wait between conception and birth instills gratitude for each delicate finger and toe, and appreciation for the beauty of the human body and all its functions, right down to the last sleepy burp and snore of the infant snuggled at shoulder.

A relationship that began with the biological connection between parent and child may, through labor and with astonishing speed, become a fierce, inarticulate urge to protect the vulnerable newborn whose face is seen only after long months of worry, long hours of effort. Maybe it is the *work* of motherly or fatherly nurture that brings about a change of heart

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linking us with those who have gone before us, with those who will live after us. As our children grow, we are invited to become patient and less selfish through the presence of dependent innocents or the pique of aggravating adolescents. As we and our parents age, we are, in recognition of our own infirmities, enticed to be more forgiving, more repentant, more compassionate. Perhaps it is this witness of familial love that gives us hope beyond the present: we were not made to turn to forgotten dust.

We are each of us bought through someone else's pain and taught by our own suffering that every day's breath is an infinite gift. We are none of us simply biological creatures. Like sparrows and lilies, we are known and accounted for; clothed by more than mortal flesh, the end of our creation is joy.

Camille S. Williams *is a poet. Her article "Abortion and the Actualized Self" appeared in the November 1991 issue of* First Things.

The Newtape File V

Dear Nephew, my plutonic sprout,

I am pleased as punch (spiked with Demon Rum, of course) at your recent success in instilling in young Missy Smith the conviction that she is "fat" and must starve herself into conformity with the popular image of an attractive young woman as looking exactly like an attractive young man with small breasts attached. The androgyny craze works in our favor. Need I say why? Distinction destruction, of course! This torture of the body in the name of a mandated vision of the flesh is just what the Diabolical Doctor ordered. And it has the additional salutary effect of driving yet another wedge between mother and father, child and parent, in the name of power or freedom or choice or beauty. The more we "disempower" people from working out their own problems the better. The more the outside intrudes in the form of culturally authoritative sanctions against legitimate authority the better. For, left to their own devices, ordinary folks might revert to a vocabulary damning, if I may take one of Our Father Below's words in vain, to our best interests. Hope, Faith, and Charity—these must not abide! Terms of everyday ethics, as certain wretched humans call it, are very difficult to kill. Yet kill them we must and a domestic war of all against all fueled by our propaganda is the most efficient method yet devised for undermining the ethical menace.

May I note a trend very much in our favor? I refer to a further debasement of language, this time in the direction of a salutary "abstractedness." The more people are "deeply concerned" about things far away, outside their purview of concrete responsibility, the better for us. You know that Our Father Below wants us to appear, as often as possible, in the form of an angel of light. Abstract benevolence and sentiment serve us oh so nicely. There are so many splendid examples! I have picked but three for your delectation.

The first is a story I overheard during a visit some years ago to a place in northwestern Massachusetts called "Happy Valley." Moviegoers were crowded into a small art film theater in a town called Northampton, sophisticated far beyond anything yet dreamed of in Fremont, Nebraska, and one trendy couple described their recently concluded trip to Nicaragua, then under the happy control of the Sandinistas, and told of their virtuous labor shoveling manure on a state farm. They were helping the "peasants" to plant crops and fighting American imperialism. Those around the couple trembled with politically correct delight. This was, for me, a perfect moment. A trip to earn political kudos for oneself and to promote an abstraction ("the revolution"). For that very season had brought news of struggling farm families all over America, including some whose farms were being foreclosed in western Massachusetts. But no assistance from the abstractly benevolent went to them, for they were defined politically as an updated version of Marx's phrase—and he was a genial phrase-maker, was he not?—"rural idiots."

A second example ripped from past and present headlines. Think, dear Nephew, of all the prominent men who are what is called "progressive" with respect to women's issues who treat real, flesh-and-blood women before them with contempt. And think, as well, of the pact with Our Father Below some women's groups make when they say that working with a well-known sexual predator may make them "uncomfortable," but if he is "correct" on their issues (abortion, sexual harassment—if somebody else is doing it) then they must mute their ire and stem their scorn. I noticed that the most recent instance featured a "progressive" whose sexual misconduct was well known to women's groups. But they held their fire until after he had been reelected because he was on "their side" on the "key issues." Now they are clamoring for an investigation because the thing has become too embarrassing.

Our Father Below adores this sort of thing: projecting altruism outward toward the correct public policy, the globally benevolent, the politically correct, the theoretically grand, while suffocating virtue that might operate personally, in everyday life. I am particularly fond of grand theories of Justice that diminish by contrast the acts of everyday life called by The Enemy's camp "charity" or "decency" or some other such poisonous possibilities. One of The Enemy's allies (though himself an unbeliever) proclaimed that

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he should like to be able to "love my mother and also love justice." Thankfully, this nuisance, Albert Camus, was killed at an early age. He was a bone in my throat. He kept insisting that one had to tend to concrete matters concretely, and that one could not leapfrog over particular ties in favor of abstract and by definition impossible ones, as our ally, Jean-Paul Sartre, argued so successfully for so many years.

Here is a third instance, of a similar sort. Another delicious item from my file, a love-letter in the *New York Times* under the title, "A Man's Child Care Crusade." This is the story of one Richard B. Stolley, editorial director of Time, Inc. who heads something called Child Care Action Campaign. It seems that when Mr. Stolley was young he was an admirably inattentive father. His ex-wife stayed home with the children. "'It was her problem,'" he says. "But this 63-year-old grandfather, an athletic-looking man who jogs regularly and wears Italian suits, has had a dramatic change of mind," so says the *Times*. I am so pleased their reporter did not catch on. For Mr. Stolley has not changed his mind at all. I confess that I was apprehensive when I began the piece. But I quickly got reassured, for Mr. Stolley, who is "angry" and "outraged" at the child care situation, still wants anybody but himself to care for children. You see, Mr. Stolley used to think child care was something that someone else should do so that it did not hamper him. Today, Mr. Stolley continues to think child care is something someone else should do. But this can be treated as a marvelous change of heart because the "someone else" is no longer a wife but the government or the employer! The *New York Times* is our solid ally on this front. Too bad the reporter really couldn't decipher Mr. Stolley's line. "Everywhere you look in our society, if child care breaks down, everything else starts grinding to a halt." And what did he have in mind? Did he mean children grow up bereft of love and care and this is bad for children? No, he means "work in this magazine company involves strange hours and depends on child care arrangements." What's good for Time Inc. is good for America! I could not stop smirking for several moments at this giddy portrayal of Mr. Stolley as a transformed sort of guy. A windfall for us and unplanned by anyone, just another delicious example of the "cultural context."

I fear I may have tired you, but these exemplary stories should give you renewed energy for the struggle with the Smiths, precious devilkin.

Your affectionate uncle,
Newtape

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, *discoverer and keeper of Newtape's epistles from the Underworld, has a day job teaching political philosophy at Vanderbilt University.*

Unbelievable!

George Weigel

Moral theologians have long disputed the point at which a child reaches the "age of reason." But surely, in these United States, the answer is clear: one reaches the "age of reason" when one can read the box scores (the baseball box scores, of course) in the morning paper. For to grasp the meaning and significance of "S" and "E"—sacrifice and error—is to be put firmly, if not always decisively, onto the path of moral discernment.

An Orioles' fan *in principio et nunc et semper*, I reached the age of reason during the hegemony of the New York Yankees in the 1950s: a decade in which the Bronx Bombers took the American League guidon year in and year out, with the exceptions of 1954 (which gave rise to Hadley Arkes' immortal mnemonic: "I can always remember when St. Augustine was born; it was 1,600 years before the Indians won their last pennant") and 1959. This annual experience of powerlessness in my formative years might in a more violent era have inclined me to anarcho-syndicalism. But amidst the placid Eisenhower prosperity, it led only to an intense loathing of the pinstriped fiends that brought me close to meltdown in 1960: the year that a bunch of Baltimore rookies (the "Baby Birds and their Incubator Infield," as the *Sun* put it) led the American League on Labor Day—only to drop four straight in the House That Ruth Built later in September, as Mantle, Maris, Moose Skowron, Whitey Ford, Elston Howard, Yogi, and all the rest ground inexorably toward yet another World Series appearance.

This kind of thing tends to singe one's soul. And thus it took a long time before I could admit any Yankee fan into the company of my friends. (The ecumenism of my meridian years, considered empirically, required less of a conversion than might be imagined. One runs into all sorts of people as one edges ever farther from the homestead; merely to *find* a Yankee fan in the Baltimore of my youth was as improbable as finding a Republican.) Still, I cannot shake the preternatural intuition that to root for the Yankees is unseemly, unrighteous, even vaguely obscene: something like rooting for the Italians during the Abyssinian War. Steinbrenner's pontificate, the pure type of the degeneration of baseball from epic to circus, has not made me any more forbearing: even to so coarsened a sensibility as that of your typical Yankee fan, the descent from DiMaggio to Reggie must surely be regarded as a frightening example of moral and cultural decline. And so my ancient animosity endures.

But I am weakening.

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And it's all the Scooter's fault.

For the catechumens: Phil Rizzuto—"The Scooter"—was the Yankee shortstop from 1941 to 1956, the Bronx's answer to Brooklyn legend Pee Wee Reese. (Whether Rizzuto belongs with Reese in the Hall of Fame is a subject only slightly less controverted than the *filioque*.) In the early 1960s, the Scooter began doing Yankee broadcasts on radio and television. But what in the world was Phil—for whom the elementary rules of English grammar and syntax are as foreign as the semiotics of Ugaritic—saying?

Turns out he was saying poetry.

At least that's what two geniuses, Hart Seely and Tom Peyer, discovered when they took some tapes of Rizzuto's broadcasts and transcribed them as free verse. Moreover, *O Holy Cow! The Selected Verse of Phil Rizzuto* proves what many of us had long suspected: that no man could spend fifteen years in the majors—at least in the days before Barry Bonds' earring and $7 million annual contract—without developing a certain depth of moral insight, of the sort associated with absorbing losses and playing in pain.

Thus the Scooter's off-the-cuff "Prayer for the Captain" (as Seely and Peyer style it), ad-libbed during the pregame show on August 3, 1979, shortly after Yankee catcher Thurman Munson was killed in a plane crash:

There's a little prayer I always say
Whenever I think of my family or when I'm flying,
When I'm afraid, and I am afraid of flying.
It's just a little one. You can say it no matter what,
Whether you're Catholic or Jewish or Protestant or whatever.
And I've probably said it a thousand times
Since I heard the news on Thurman Munson.

It's not trying to be maudlin or anything.
His Eminence, Cardinal Cooke, is going to come out
And say a little prayer for Thurman Munson.
But this is just a little one I say time and time again,
It's just: Angel of God, Thurman's guardian dear,
To whom his love commits him here there or everywhere,
Ever this night and day be at his side,
To light and guard, to rule and guide.

For some reason it makes me feel like I'm talking to Thurman,
Or whoever's name you put in there,
Whether it be my wife or any of my children, my parents or anything.
It's just something to keep you really from going bananas.
Because if you let this,
If you keep thinking about what happened, and you can't understand it,
That's what really drives you to despair.

Faith. You gotta have faith.
You know, they say time heals all wounds,
And I don't agree with that a hundred percent.
It gets you to cope with wounds.
You carry them the rest of your life.

Then there is Rizzuto's paean to the paschal joys of a fresh start, declaimed into the microphone during the first inning of Opening Day, 1991:

Absolutely!
If you don't get a little,
A few butterflies,
No matter what you do,
On the first day of anything,
You're not human.

The season, like life, unfolds, and paths diverge in the woods. But the Scooter, an Italo-American Frost, knows that no options means no humanity; thus Rizzuto, before the last game of the 1976 playoff between the Yankees and the Royals:

All right this is it,
The whole season coming down
To just one ball game,
And every mistake will be magnified,
And every great play will be magnified,
And it's a tough night for the players,
I'll tell ya.
I know last night,
Being in the same situation many times
With the great Yankee teams of the past,
You stay awake,
And you dream,
And you think of what might be,
If you are the hero or the goat.

Rizzuto as poet occasionally probes the outer limits of postmodernism, as in the closing line of "DiMaggio's Bat":

The wood . . .
I mean,
You couldn't chip that bat.
That's the way DiMaggio's wood was on the bats.
He would ask for that type of wood.
Being an old fisherman
He knew about the trees.

But then he returns, easily and without seeming to press the matter, to the casuistry of the confessional

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that he learned as a boy:

And he hits one in the hole
They're gonna have to hurry.
THEY'LL NEVER GET HIM!
They got him.
How do you like that.
Holy cow.
I changed my mind before he got there.
So that doesn't count as an error.

The author of "Prayer for the Captain" is, clearly, no Panglossian optimist. And yet for someone who, if he hasn't seen it all, has seen a lot of it, Phil Rizzuto has somehow retained the kind of childlike wonder at creation that characterized the spirituality of his countryman, Francis of Assisi. Thus "Squirrels":

I.
In the backyard we got a lot of trees.
In our home I've watched them leap
From limb to limb.
Unbelievable.

II.
Did you ever get one in your attic?
They're not too cute
When they get in your attic.
I'll tell you that.

III.
I would not harm a squirrel.
I don't want to get those animal lovers . . .
I got them in my attic.
No, I got,
But I got a squirrel cage
And trapped them in the cage
Then took them out in the woods
Over by Yogi's house
And dropped them off.

This is, by all accounts, baseball's season of discontent. Storm clouds of foreboding hang over the national pastime: idiotic and arrogant owners, greedy and arrogant players, no leadership, lunatic economics, flagging fan interest. The owner/player confrontations may even conspire to produce a 1994 in which no major league baseball is played: an iniquity beyond the combined talents of Hitler and Tojo. But amidst all this *tsouris*, there is the game: this lyrical game, this intensely human game, this clock-free preview of time-beyond-time. And there are the stories, passed from friend to friend and generation to generation. And there is the ongoing interface of the game and life: because there are people like the Scooter who have the soul to know that neither life nor the game is just a game.

Me, writing something nice about a Yankee great.
Unbelievable.

GEORGE WEIGEL *is President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington and the author of* The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism *(Oxford).* O Holy Cow! *is available from the Ecco Press. Phil Rizzuto is donating his royalties to a variety of children's charities.*

Stella and Her Late August Garden

"Get *that* tomato, there, and that one," she
says as she points with her cane and holds
my arm. We have walked the short space from
the back porch to her late August garden,
tomatoes too ripe, yellow-green peppers
in threes bursting through the dry. Doing
as I'm told, I pick the red ones, snap off
the best peppers and set them, one by one,
on the brown grass. If this moment is as
large as it seems right now, I must
surrender it, give up my self to a will
neither mine nor hers, listen when she says
"When Petey was small, we had a summer this
dry. Get *those* peppers." No pause between
what was and what is, she points again. We
turn and walk back. Then, trading my arm
for the porch rail, she says, "I can make it
from here." And now I return, as if I am
not alone, to gather her sweet gifts.

Barbara Wuest

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Coming Out Ahead: The Homosexual Moment in the Academy

Jerry Z. Muller

The journal *Victorian Studies* recently invited submissions for a special issue, entitled "Victorian Sexualities." "Topics," stated the call for papers, "may include (but certainly are not limited to) Victorian homosexualities; the erotics of dress and cross-dressing; sexuality and city life, desire and Orientalism; sexuality and victimization; commodification and desire; religious ritual and sexuality; the erotics of spectacle. Essays which emerge from interdisciplinary study are particularly encouraged." Far from being idiosyncratic, the projected issue of this eminent journal is indicative of a larger moment in American academic culture—the homosexual moment.

By referring to the present as "the homosexual moment" I do not mean that persons of homosexual orientation are necessarily more prominent in academe than they have been in the past. It has long been the case that such persons have been represented in the professoriate, as they have of course been in most walks of cultural life. The difference is that what was once a private disposition has now become the stuff of public identity and ideology.

No doubt the academy has always had its share of distinguished practitioners of sexual and other offenses. But while the practitioners of, say, adultery have not sought openly to proclaim the virtue of seduction or the intrinsic merit of infidelity, the practitioners of what has long been considered at best a disability and at worst an abomination have increasingly banded together to proclaim their practice as praiseworthy, and to demand that others do so as well. What is new is not only the increasing public acknowledgment of homosexuality or the increasing scholarship about homosexuals. What is most important is the rising demand for public recognition and respect for homosexuality as such. There is a growing body of literature by academics who define themselves *as* homosexuals, and who make homosexual identity into a perspective from which our culture is to be evaluated. For those interested in the larger cultural ramifications of the homosexual moment, this may be its most significant feature.

My purpose here is to provide a general *tour d'horizon* of the current place of the homosexual movement in the American academy as well as to examine the aims and claims of some of its most accomplished spokesmen. I hope to convey the self-understanding of the more articulate voices of the homosexual movement in the universities, and to indicate why their linkage with other trends in the academy is likely to increase their influence in the years to come. They claim that the issue of the legitimacy of homosexuality cannot be examined in isolation, that it is necessarily related to wider claims about the nature of culture. My assumption is that they are correct, and that it is not least for this reason that we ought to attend to what they have to say.

I

Recently, and especially within the last year, homosexual ideology has made a great leap forward in its institutionalization in the American academy. At many colleges, gay/lesbian/bisexual student associations are among the most active organizations on campus, funded by student fees and by institutional funds from the university's Office of Multiculturalism. Frequently, the program of extra-academic orientation for freshmen includes sessions in which students are presented with "homosexual perspectives" alongside what are alleged to be those of blacks, Asians, and other minorities; students are repeatedly reminded that antipathy to homosexuality is on a par with racism. At Harvard, each dorm has a designated gay tutor. Columbia University recently accepted a gift of $200,000 to establish a

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scholarship that will be given each year to a student who is active in gay matters on campus, and the chairman of Columbia's English Department has let it be known that he is "committed to hiring, tenuring, and working with" gay and lesbian scholars. Universities including Stanford, Chicago, Iowa, and Pitzer College have recently begun to offer spousal benefits including health insurance and tuition remission to the homosexual partners of faculty members. Columbia University Press publishes a series, "Between Men—Between Women: Lesbian and Gay Studies," including most recently Allen Ellenzweig, *The Homoerotic Photograph: Male Images from Durieu/Delacroix to Mapplethorpe* (1992). Commercial publishers with similar series include NAL Books and St. Martin's.

There have been several annual national academic conferences devoted to gay studies, three at Yale and one each at Harvard and Rutgers, with plans for others at CUNY and in San Francisco. The national Lesbian and Gay Studies Association was founded in 1991. There are academic journals focused on homosexuality, such as the *Journal of Homosexuality*, which published its twenty-third volume in 1992. The spread of gay studies has led to a proliferation of works on the history, incidence, and culture of homosexuality.* This has certainly marked an increase in knowledge. Often, however, this new scholarship has reinterpreted Western cultural history in a manner that underplays the cultural condemnation of homosexual activity or overstates the incidence of homosexuality.†

But to focus only on explicitly homosexual journals, associations, and academic programs is radically to misjudge the impact and importance of homosexual ideology in academe. For its greatest influence has been exerted through other channels, especially women's studies, and is often carried on under rubrics such as gender studies, the study of "sexuality," or "cultural studies."

The history of sexuality has become a growth field within academic history, including the new *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, published by the University of Chicago Press. Within the journal as within the new subdiscipline, homosexuality is heavily overrepresented in both subject matter and personnel. The past year has seen the publication of a plethora of works on sexuality, increasingly focused on intermediate or marginal forms of sexuality. One commercial publisher of highly priced books aimed at the academic market—Routledge—has made homosexuality and sexual ambiguity a specialty. Its current catalogue of recently published works includes *Modern Homosexualities: Fragments of Lesbian and Gay Experience*; *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*; *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*; *The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement*; *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*; *Peers, Queers, and Commons: The Struggle for Gay Law Reform*; and *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*. The most widely hailed of Routledge's current crop is *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* by Marjorie Garber, the Director of the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies at Harvard University. The great appeal of transvestism, Garber notes, lies in the fact that it calls into question "binary hegemonic structures," a theme that is becoming the leitmotif of academic homosexual theory. In recent years, "sexuality" has become a dominant theme in interdisciplinary areas such as women's studies, film studies, gay studies, and cultural studies. The focus of much of this writing has been on marginal, intermediate, and transitory sexual identities, including an outpouring of work on hermaphrodites and cross-dressers.

Most important in measuring the influence of homosexual thought in the academy is its impact upon women's studies, by far the fastest-growing area within the humanities and social sciences, both institutionally and in terms of publications. It is estimated that there are now five hundred women's studies programs, thirty thousand courses, and fifty feminist institutes, including the Institute for Advanced Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota.

The logic by which lesbianism is regarded as the truly authentic form of feminism was memorably spelled out by Charlotte Bunch in her article "Lesbians in Revolt," first published in 1972. "Heterosexuality separates women from each other," she wrote. "It makes women define themselves through men; it forces women to compete against

* David F. Greenberg's *The Construction of Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 1988) brought together a great deal of this burgeoning literature, which has continued to grow apace in the intervening years.

† A recent work by a classicist at Berkeley, for example, notes of Michel Foucault's interpretation of Greek sexuality that "Foucault, like many other scholars, is committed to finding that in Greek culture homoeroticism is regarded as natural, that a heterosexual/homosexual bivalence and accompanying modes of normalization do not exist. . . . Accordingly, he does find just those things which he needs for the larger story which makes up the enterprise of his history of sexuality. . . ." (David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* [Cambridge University Press, 1991], pp. 172-73.) Similarly, a critic of John Boswell's influential *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980) shows on the basis of careful textual reconstruction that while "homosexual behavior is not a major issue for early Christian writers, particularly the writers of the New Testament . . . it is fallacious . . . to infer that they were tolerant of it. On the contrary, the evidence that does exist suggests that they regarded it as so self-evidently loathsome as hardly to require discussion. This attitude appears to be one which the early church inherited from its Jewish wellsprings." (Richard Hays, "Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Spring 1986, p. 203.)

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each other for men and the privilege which comes through men and their social standing. . . . Lesbianism is the key to liberation and only women who cut their ties to male privilege can be trusted to remain serious in the struggle against male dominance." The assertion that heterosexual masculinity is defined by the subordination of women has since become a mainstay of gay/lesbian theory. On this understanding, non-oppressive sexual relations are only possible between members of the same sex, and heterosexual women are victims of false consciousness, brainwashed into believing that their true interests lie in loving men rather than other women.

The impact of this logic upon the lives of feminists has been palpable. "Lesbian feminism, by affirming the primacy of women's relationships with each other and by providing an alternative feminist culture, forced many nonlesbians to reevaluate their relationships with men, male institutions, and male values," explains Estelle Freedman, a historian at Stanford. "In the process, feminists have put to rest the myth of female dependence on men and rediscovered the significance of female bonding." As Peter Novick observes in his recent book on the American historical profession:

> While only a minority of feminist historians were or became lesbians, a much larger number were inclined to agree that heterosexuality was to some substantial extent a male-imposed construct. A common response was a kind of political or cultural lesbianism. Lesbians were honored as *serious* feminists, much as Jews accorded special respect to those who demonstrated the depth of their Zionism by emigrating to Israel. Even if women did not physically separate themselves from men—and many, in various ways, did—a kind of moral separatism was fairly widespread. *(That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity" Question and the American Historical Profession,* 1988*)*

It has become ever more common for distinguished and not-so-distinguished academic feminists to "come out," including, most recently, Angela Davis.

Feminist academic journals have focused increasingly on lesbian topics. Recently, such journals have devoted whole issues to the subject, a decision which, as the editors of *Feminist Studies* (published in association with the Women's Studies Program at the University of Maryland) note, reflects "the extraordinary rapid growth and acceptance of queer theory in the humanities." The Fall 1992 issue of *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* is devoted to lesbian philosophy, and includes a bibliography of works on lesbian philosophy and culture, based, we are told, on what its editor has "found valuable in teaching lesbian feminist philosophy since 1977 and lesbian culture in women's studies since 1981 at the University of Wisconsin." *Hypatia* is published by Indiana University Press, as is *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media Culture,* which also devoted *its* Fall 1992 issue to gay and lesbian perspectives.

While the majority of academic feminists are not lesbians, lesbians constitute the largest faction of the National Women's Studies Association, and they are increasingly influential in setting the tone of academic feminism. The influence of lesbianism is perhaps the prime reason for the shift within women's studies from a concern with the roles of women as workers, mothers, wives, and political actors toward an increasing focus on "gender," defined as the social and cultural construction of sexual identity. The key assumption behind such work is that while men and women are biologically differentiated (i.e., they have a different "sex"), the characteristic qualities of maleness and femaleness are largely artifacts of culture, and arbitrarily imposed cultural constructions at that. The emphasis on the relative importance of "gender" as opposed to "sex," then, is intended to challenge the assumption that differences between men and women are either natural or immutable.

To those outside the academy, it may come as a surprise to learn that it is lesbians rather than gay men who are most important in the spread of homosexual ideology within the academy, and that most homosexual studies (whether under the rubrics of gay studies, cultural studies, men's studies, or gender studies) have evolved from or remain linked to academic feminism. This reflects the fact (as John Diggins notes in his recent book *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*) that of all the trends to come out of the countercultural left of the 1960s, it was the feminist left that was most successful in institutionalizing itself within the American academy. With its firmament of organizations, its experience in transforming academic bureaucracies through political pressure, and its supporters in high places, academic feminism has served as an institutional basis and model for homosexual scholars. Within the American Historical Association, for example, the legitimization of homosexuality has occurred under the aegis of the Committee on Women Historians, which has sponsored a survey of gay and lesbian historians. In a recent issue of the association's newsletter, the committee recommends that universities provide domestic partner benefits for homosexuals, and that in order to make historians comfortable with coming out, their colleagues should "positively demonstrate they are not homophobic . . . by publicly criticizing homophobia, and listening with interest and asking questions about gay and lesbian issues when relevant, instead of changing the subject uncomfortably." In response to the demands of the Gay and Lesbian Caucus for Political Science, the American Political Science Association established a Committee on the

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Status of Lesbians and Gays in the Profession. Similar committees now exist in the professional associations of most academic disciplines, and in the American Association of University Professors in the form of an ad hoc Committee on Discrimination Policy.*

In reflecting on the institutionalization of gay/lesbian culture in the American academy, it is useful to conceive of academic disciplines as having an institutional core of professional associations and journals, beyond which lie a penumbra of more peripheral journals and associations. If the extent of academic influence is measured by the degree of representation in core institutions, then the appearance of homosexual journals and organizations is less significant than the representation of homosexual ideology in mainstream organizations and journals. Feminist journals occupy an intermediate position. On the one hand, their interdisciplinary orientation puts them on the margin of the more established disciplines. On the other hand, the establishment and institutionalization of women's studies within the academy gives established feminist journals (such as *Feminist Studies* or *Signs*) a core position within these newly institutionalized disciplines. A mark of the homosexual moment in American academic life is the increasing appearance of articles on gay/lesbian theory in mainstream academic journals. The November 1992 issue of *Political Theory*, for example, featured an article entitled "An Ethos of Lesbian and Gay Existence" by Mark Blasius, which defines "heterosexism" as "a structure of power in society (as racism and sexism are) that privileges as superior (natural, more healthy, normative) heterosexuality over homosexuality and, through a variety of procedures of subjectification, creates homophobic subjects. . . ."

II

In political arguments aimed toward the non-homosexual public, the homosexual movement has tended toward a deterministic portrait of homosexuality as grounded in irrevocable biological or social-psychological circumstance. Yet among homosexual theorists in the academy, the propensity is toward the defense of homosexuality as a voluntarily affirmed "self-fashioning." The confluence of feminism and homosexual ideology has now led to a new stage, in which the politics of stable but multicultural and multisexual identities is being challenged by those who regard all permanent and fixed identity as a coercive restriction of autonomy, which is thought to include self-definition and redefinition. Among the most articulate spokesmen for this view is Judith Butler, Professor of Humanities at the Johns Hopkins University and a rising star in the field of gender studies. Butler's claims in her much-cited recent book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), are examined here at some length because she is not unique or marginal, but rather representative of the merging of homosexual theory and feminism that increasingly dominates discussion of issues of sex and gender in the humanities and in some of the social sciences.†

The conceptual lodestar of Butler's book, like much of the recent work in gender studies, gay/lesbian studies, and the study of "sexuality," is the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault's writings span a remarkable range of topics, from the rise of mental institutions, prisons, and academic disciplines such as political economy and linguistics, to conceptions of sexuality. Yet his works are unified by an underlying theme: "It could be otherwise." In his writings on each of these topics, Foucault undertook to trace the genealogy of one or another conception of "normalcy," with the aim of demonstrating that what we take to be standards of normalcy are merely historical and, by implication, arbitrary constructs.

A key term in Foucault's thought is the notion of "knowledge/power." Foucault's use of the term is ambiguous, and its ambiguity accounts for much of its attraction. On the one hand, Foucault seems to mean that what counts as "knowledge" is merely the result of power, of the institutionalization of one system of belief or another, backed up with the threat of force. On the other hand, he indicated that the real locus of power in modern society lies not in the state, but in the institutionalized systems of purported knowledge that entitle their practitioners to exercise control over others. For Foucault there is no such thing as legitimate authority, there is only "power," and the most insidious form of power is self-discipline, which comes from having internalized standards of normalcy from social institutions. Indeed, the modern conception of the self is portrayed by Foucault as particularly insidious, because it involves subjecting the body to self-control according to socially defined standards. In his *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (1976), Foucault maintained that the very notion of "sex" was itself a relatively recent historical construct, a new category that "made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological func-

* An important caveat here is that because gay/lesbian scholars, following the model of academic feminists, tend to be more activist in professional associations, it is possible that their *organizational* weight and salience may be substantially greater than their actual influence on scholarship and teaching in the field. I suspect, however, that in the long run scholarship and teaching do follow the lead of disciplinary activists. The disproportionate influence that such activists have in matters of funding and academic appointments creates substantial incentives for others to follow their lead.

† Butler makes related arguments in "Imitation and Gender Subordination," in Diana Fuss, ed., *inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (Routledge, 1991), and in "Sexual Inversions," in Domna C. Stanton, ed., *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS* (University of Michigan Press, 1991). Together with Joan W. Scott of the Institute for Advanced Study, Butler is editor of *Feminists Theorize the Political* (Routledge, 1992).

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tions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures." Implicit in Foucault's key works, such as *Discipline and Punish* (1975), is a liberationist ideal of the body as open to the multiple possibilities of polymorphous perversity. It was an ideal that Foucault strove to realize in his own life, as documented in James Miller's recent *The Passion of Michel Foucault.*

The key assumption Butler wishes to dispute is that there is anything natural, necessary, desirable, or ethically vital in the culturally imposed direction of female sexual drives toward men and toward conception. (She presumably holds that the social channeling of male sexual desire toward women is equally arbitrary, though she devotes little attention to this side of the issue.) Butler characterizes her task as "decentering" the defining institutions of "phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality." Her assumption is that existing social standards which present heterosexuality as normative are essentially arbitrary social constructions that serve to preserve the privileges of a dominant group (in this case, heterosexual men). She aims to disentangle what she calls the "heterosexual matrix": "a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality."

For Butler, *all* gender-related acts are unnatural, and all sexual roles are essentially an act. In the spirit of Foucault, Butler regards her task as exposing "the foundational categories of sex, gender, and desire as effects of a specific formation of power" in order to bring into question "the gender categories that support gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality." The "foundational categories of identity" that make heterosexual behavior and desire appear natural and inevitable are to be unmasked as "performances," which are a product of culture rather than of nature. The paradigm of gender identity becomes the female impersonator: for, according to Butler, what heterosexual women do is essentially the same as what female impersonators do, i.e., they strive to adhere to cultural practices (such as heterosexuality) that are no more "natural" than the behavior of the drag queen is natural. Drag, Butler suggests, is not "the imitation of gender"; rather it dramatizes "the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established."

Butler radicalizes the longstanding feminist distinction between a biologically defined and fixed "sex" and a culturally defined and hence variable "gender." Butler rejects any such distinction on the grounds that it concedes too much to biological determination. Our very conceptions of biological "sex," she posits, are themselves *nothing but* cultural consructs. Thus "*man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one."

For Judith Butler, as for Foucault himself, the notion that each individual is of one sex rather than the other is a cultural construct, one which serves to socially regulate and control sexuality and which conceals and artificially unifies a variety of sexual functions that are in fact not intrinsically related. Our conception of the body as gendered, she claims, has no status in reality. "Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all." The impression of the gendered body she characterizes as "performative," by which she means that it arises from the various acts which together give the *illusion* that gender has a deeper reality.

Butler's achievement is to merge Foucault's method and premises with a lesbian agenda. Butler takes issue with genitally oriented sexuality and calls for an alternative conception of pleasure that is "outside the reproductive economy" and "understood as a counterstrategy to the reproductive construction of genitality." Her quest is to subvert the understanding of the female body characteristic of the current "organization of sexuality," in which "the female body is required to assume maternity as the essence of its self and the law of its desire." Exposing "the maternal libidinal economy as a product of an historically specific organization of sexuality," and conceiving of the body as entirely a construction of culture is intended to liberate the body "to an open future of cultural possibilities." Just as Marx tried to show that the economic laws which bourgeois political economy regarded as a natural necessity were a result of passing historical configurations, so Butler conceives her task as exposing the purported natural necessity of heterosexual conceptions of gender and sex as contingent social constructs. The parallel with Marx is Butler's own. While his goal was to bring about revolution, hers is to bring about "gender disorder."

Butler holds to the Foucaultian axioms that power is ubiquitous and that it is only power which establishes truth. She concludes that "power can be neither withdrawn nor refused, but only redeployed. Indeed, in my view, the normative focus for gay and lesbian practice ought to be on the subversive and parodic redeployment of power rather than on the impossible fantasy of its full-scale transcendence." The "redeployment" of power, in this case, means that those with the power of interpretation use their power to subvert the belief that there is anything "natural" about sexual identity, desire, and conduct,

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and to break the normative link between biological endowment, behavior, and sexual object. "The loss of gender norms would have the effect of proliferating gender configurations, destabilizing substantive identity, and depriving the naturalizing narratives of compulsory heterosexuality of their central protagonists: 'man' and 'woman.'"

Within this agenda, transitive and intermediate forms of sexual identity acquire a special significance. Drag, cross-dressing, and butch/femme lesbian identities, Butler writes, all serve to "parody" the notion of a nature-based gender, and reveal that cultural gender does not flow naturally and inevitably from anatomical sex, but rather is a socially learned role (performance) with no essential link to anatomy. "Parodic proliferation," she declares, "deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities."

While "feminist theory" of this sort may seem so abstruse as to be of very limited influence, it acquires a wider resonance because of the somewhat anomalous position of women's studies in the academy. Political pressures from organized feminists, and the perception that the study of women was being excluded from more established disciplines, provided the original impetus for women's studies. With aid from the Rockefeller and Ford foundations, programs and majors in women's studies have proliferated and are now well institutionalized. But women's studies, like other new academic disciplines, faces a problem of academic legitimation, since it does not have its own distinctive methods, nor is its subject matter discrete. When one includes everything that women have done, everything that has been done to women, and everything that has been thought, said, or imagined about women—and women's studies does include all of these—there are few areas of human history and culture that cannot in theory fall under the rubric of women's studies. Yet by the norms of the academy, the existence of a "major" or "program" without some integrative intellectual framework is embarrassing. Thus the supply of women's studies programs creates a demand for feminist theory, a set of propositions with which participating faculty members must be familiar and to which students must be exposed in introductory women's studies courses. The substance of such theory must, perforce, emphasize the differences between women and men—whether such differences are perceived as natural, or, as is increasingly the case, when they are treated as wholly a matter of cultural construction. When one combines this disciplinary imperative with the predilection of feminists to regard lesbians as those most faithful to the cause and with the understandable propensity of lesbians to be attracted toward women's studies, one has an institutionally fostered tendency for the propagation of lesbian-inspired theory within academic feminism.

For reasons of academic (as well as extra-academic) politics, lesbian feminists tend to form coalitions with gay men, thus expanding the audience for their work. Moreover, to an extent difficult for those outside the academy to imagine, feminist scholarship exerts an attraction upon many heterosexual men, who perceive feminist studies to be where the academic action is hottest and who live in dread of the anxiety-inspiring accusation that they "don't understand what is happening in the discipline." Thus, in diffuse form, the influence of feminist theory and its lesbian avant-garde is more widespread than its esoteric language and assumptions might warrant.

The project of making heterosexuality seem unnatural is central to contemporary academic homosexual theory and practice. David Halperin, a professor of literature at MIT now at work on *Queering the Canon*, writes that the purpose of his scholarship is to demonstrate that "we need not assume that sexuality itself is a literal, or natural, reality. . . . One aim, and (I hope), one effect, of my interpretive strategy is to contribute, insofar as scholarship can, to the task of reconstituting the body as a potential site of cultural activism and resistance. If the sexual body is indeed historical—if there is, in short, no orgasm without ideology—perhaps ongoing inquiry into the politics of pleasure will serve to deepen the pleasures, as well as to widen the possibilities, of politics."*

It is a mark of the homosexual moment that this understanding is increasingly finding its way into the mainstream press. The March 11, 1993 lead article in the *Washington Post*'s "Style Section" on the growing salience of drag queens notes that "the feminism-inspired dismantling of traditional gender roles, with all the tension and celebration and confusion it has brought, has probably done the most to fuel the mainstreaming of drag." The article quotes Harvard's Marjorie Garber, who reminds us of the new truth that "Gender is always an act. It's not a natural but a culturally derived category."

Another facet of recent academic homosexual theory—namely to call into question not only the necessity of differences between men and women but the actual binary distinction between men and women—is also in the process of reaching the mainstream media. The day after the *Washington Post* focused on drag queens, the op-ed page of the *New York Times* was given over to the reflections of Anne Fausto-Sterling, a feminist professor of medicine at Brown University, whose previous writings have challenged the "nucleocentric assumptions" of molecular biology. "Biologically speaking," she claims, "there are many gradations running from female to male; along that spectrum lie at least five sexes—

*"Historicizing the Sexual Body," in *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS.*

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perhaps even more." Her purpose is to question the accepted assumption within modern medicine that persons of mixed genital formation ought to be transformed by surgery or hormonal treatment into either men or women. Instead, Fausto-Sterling proposes "the alternative route of unimpeded sexuality," a path blocked only by the social need "to maintain clear distinctions between the sexes."

III

One may concur in part with the observations of homosexual theorists like Judith Butler and yet find their logic and conclusions radically flawed. One can agree, for example, that sexual roles are learned, that they are learned from the observation and imitation of others, and that the way in which the fact of sex is to be expressed is in this sense a social construct. The weakness of Butler's position lies in the conclusion that because sexual roles are learned and vary across cultures, they are entirely arbitrary. The problem lies with the assumption that there are no socially or morally compelling reasons for culturally imparted conceptions of how sexuality ought to be expressed. Like most feminist theorists, Butler assumes that "gender" (behavioral norms linked to sex) is changeable to the extent that it is culturally rather than biologically determined. The possibility that particular standards of behavior may be socially necessary but not biologically programmed is not even considered. All such theorists appear to be unaware of the fundamental Humean insight that many important social codes and institutions are the result neither of nature nor of human design; they are patterns that arise unintentionally and over time are imbued with cultural sanction because they correspond most adequately to social necessities. The fact that shared rules of behavior are cultural artifacts does not therefore imply that there are not good reasons for sharing them.

The greatest weakness of such theorists lies in the assumption, championed by Foucault and articulated by Butler, that heterosexuality and reproductivity are merely arbitrary constructs. The natural basis of heterosexual attraction as part of normal human experience is bracketed out by homosexual theorists as part of the attack on the very notion of sexual normalcy—rather as if a deaf theorist were to insist that spoken language is abnormal merely because he does not hear it. Ignored as well is the long history of reflection on the necessary admixture of nature and culture, according to which the place of culture is to strengthen the more noble, holy, or socially useful parts of our nature while teaching us to repress degrading, dangerous, or asocial desires. In the name of self-fashioning, such theory deprives us of any model according to which the self ought to be fashioned.

These lacunae reflect the unwillingness (and possibly the inability) of homosexual theorists to even raise the most basic and fundamental issues of moral, social, and religious thought. Over a decade ago in a special issue of *Salmagundi* devoted to homosexuality, Jean Bethke Elshtain noted that the ideologists of gay liberation presented a vision of politics with "no sense of social goods or purposes." The logical conclusion of their claims was "a social world in which everyone can openly and freely engage in sexual behavior of any sort and *be* anything whatever." They presumed "that the ultimate premises of moral codes and restrictions in human culture are wholly arbitrary," and they were united by "opposition to social distinctions and categories *themselves*, not simply to invidious distinctions and to categories that, invariably, buttress unacceptable hierarchies of domination and structures of injustice." Today, Elshtain's characterization rings even more true. But such claims are increasingly becoming the mainstay not of a small group of gay liberationists, but of a network of scholars in a variety of disciplines and interdisciplines. In the name of self-creation and re-creation, the notion of shared standards according to which we ought to fashion ourselves is denounced as inherently oppressive. In this understanding, sexual choices, to be truly authentic, must be arbitrary. And the social impact of our sexual choices must be ignored.

It may at first seem puzzling that homosexual theorists fail even to *address* such central issues in social theory and religious thought as the role of stable familial structures in the process of human creation and moralization, the place of stable sexual identity in the preservation of marriage, and the place of reaching out to the sexual "other" in the order of creation. That failure may be explained in two ways. The first expresses the self-understanding of the theorists in question, the second offers a more critical perspective on their enterprise.

For homosexual theorists influenced by Foucault (which in the contemporary American academic setting means most of them), what has been considered "truth" in the past is merely the product of power relations, and the way to transform "truth" itself is through changing the structure of power. From the point of view of such theorists, the role of theory is not to demonstrate the falsity of existing truth claims, since debates about truth are regarded as futile and nonsensical. Rather, such theorists can only assert, reassert, and insist upon the assumption of the arbitrary nature of existing standards in the hope that such emphatic reiteration will serve to still criticism, while they work to change existing standards by transforming the institutional structures of power through which, according to Foucaultians, truth is not discovered or institutionalized, but actually *created*. It is not intellectual cogency that leads to enhanced institutional prestige, but increased institutional power that leads to the acceptance of asser-

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tions as "true" or at least as beyond the bounds of criticism.

Thus, from the Foucaultian point of view, intellectual arguments serve less to subvert existing truth by analytic rigor than to provide the verbal armature under which the struggle for academic power can be pursued. The road to the committee room is paved with theory, but it is only in the committee room that what will count as valid intellectual claims will be decided. In the words of Mark Blasius, a student of Michel Foucault who now teaches political science at the City University of New York, "If truth is created through communal life as an objectification of the values that the members of the community share, then the creation of truth—not only about lesbian and gay existence but, from that vantage point, about what politics is today—refocuses contemporary human reality in a new way. What will protect and enable lesbians and gay men to flourish is an ethos that serves as a condition of possibility for politics, understood both in the creation of community among and between lesbians and gay men as well as the transformation of institutionalized power relations to the extent that lesbians and gay men visibly occupy positions of sociocultural power and authority."

A more critical interpretation of the homosexual/Foucaultian position is that truth claims are not wholly arbitrary, but rather are subject to judgment based upon criteria of coherence, plausibility, and conformity to experience, which are at least partially universalizable. The homosexual position, however, is not capable of providing answers to the basic problems of human biological and social reproduction that would meet any such criteria. Any sociocultural system is based upon shared norms of behavior that are regarded as preferred, permitted, or prohibited. Through formal laws or through the punitive effect of social approbation and disapprobation (the allocation of "respect"), all sociocultural systems necessarily impose psychic costs on those who violate such norms and bestow psychic benefits on those who follow them. The question for most of modern social and political theory has been whether a given historical sociocultural system distributes psychic costs and benefits in a manner that provides for collective well-being, whether well-being is measured by moral, religious, or hedonistic standards.

The fact that a given sociocultural system inhibits certain pleasures (including the pleasure that comes from the respect of others), and that it inhibits the pleasures of some more than the pleasures of others—which homosexual/Foucaultian theorists treat as if it were a sufficient argument against the legitimacy of the heterosexual norm—is true of any conceivable social condition. Since such theorists cannot offer an answer to the question, "What would be the moral, social, and biological consequences of the system you advocate, and why should we prefer it to normative heterosexuality?", their strategy must be to prevent the raising of such questions, or to deny the legitimacy of such considerations in adjudicating intellectual and cultural controversies.

This strategy has been remarkably successful. With a rapidity attributable in large part to a total lack of articulate resistance, homosexual ideology has achieved an unquestioned and uncontested legitimacy in American academic life.* Within the academy, as within nonacademic elite culture, the definition of opposition to homosexuality as "homophobia"—a definition which implies that it is impossible to give good reasons for the cultural disapproval of homosexuality—is the best evidence of the success of this strategy.

The homosexual movement has defined the terms of the debate over homosexuality, and it may increasingly define the larger questions of sexual identity. Until recently, among the educated middle classes cut off from religious traditions, the Freudian paradigm of genitally oriented sexuality as a hallmark of psychological maturity served to delegitimate homosexuality by conceiving of it as arrested development. One effect of the decreasing prestige of Freudianism in our culture has been the diminished articulation of this understanding, which though ultimately secular in origin was compatible with Jewish and Christian understandings.

"But surely," it will be said, "none of this matters very much. The homosexual moment will be a passing one. Common sense will reassert itself." Perhaps. "Most of those in the academy are cowed rather than converted," it is argued, which is true enough but may be beside the point. Waiting for an outbreak of civil courage among academics is (as Irving Howe wrote in another context) "steady work." In the meantime, normative understandings of sexuality that cannot be articulated cannot be transmitted. If heterosexual marriage based upon the culturally guided direction of desire is not merely an arbitrary construct but is grounded upon vital understandings of the bases of trans-generational common life, then the inability to transmit that understanding will have profound costs. FT

* In the special double issue of *Salmagundi* referred to above ("Homosexuality: Sacrilege, Vision, and Politics," Fall 1982-Winter 1983), the subject was still somewhat exotic and outré, and the issue was a valuable source of memoirs, reflections, and reportage, much of it on a high intellectual level. Looking back at the volume, one is struck by the fact that while over half the articles favored homosexuality, a significant minority were critical either of homosexuality as such or of current homosexual ideology and academic practice. Today it would probably be impossible to put together such a volume. Few writers would be brave enough to publish pieces fundamentally critical of homosexual ideology, and the editors of *Salmagundi* would probably not dare to commission such articles in the first place. That is what power/knowledge means in the present homosexual moment in American academic culture.

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God in a World of Gods

Peter L. Berger

In North America, and increasingly in Europe, it has become a truism to say that the present situation is marked by pluralism, or multiculturalism. Some truisms happen to be true; this one certainly is. Nor is there any great mystery as to how this situation has come about. It is the result of massive migration in the post-World War II period, which in turn has had a variety of causes: economic and political pressures in the countries from which the migrants came, labor shortages and an easing of immigration barriers in the countries to which they moved, and in the latter countries probably also an easing of the prejudices that had in the past resulted in high barriers (though arguably this new tolerance could turn out to be a temporary phenomenon). In any case, most of the large cities in the North Atlantic region, and increasingly many smaller communities as well, now contain large numbers of residents who only a generation ago would have seemed to the natives exotic and rare apparitions. There is every reason to think that this situation will be a permanent one. In other words, North American and European pluralism today most likely foreshadows an even more intense pluralism tomorrow.

It is hardly surprising that this new situation should have led to unsettling developments both in the population at large and in more rarefied intellectual milieus. The old liberal assumption that getting to know people will make for more positive attitudes toward them has proven to be empirically shaky at best. Proximity is no guarantee of tolerance and may often enough be the catalyst for violent antagonism. But the new pluralism has also led to some serious reflection about national identity, about the relationship of citizenship and values, and about the social status of particular cultural traditions. This is not the place to review these social, cultural, and political developments—some of them very silly indeed, some morally offensive, others posing serious questions to which there are no easy answers. The point that needs stressing here is that most of these developments have an important religious component.

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Arguably, the religious component of the tensions generated by pluralism is more consequential in Europe than in North America. One reason for this is the simple fact that the United States and Canada, unlike Europe, have a long history of successfully absorbing immigrants. Another important fact is the preponderance of Muslims among the immigrants to Europe. Of all the major world religions today, Islam is undoubtedly the most muscular not only in its religious stance but in its resistance to cultural concessions. By contrast, most immigrants to North America have been Christian (from Latin America but also among many immigrants from East Asia), Jewish (immigrants from the former Soviet Union), and the variety of religions of South and East Asia, all of them marked by a general absence of militancy and a long-standing ability to make cultural concessions. Put simply, it is much more difficult for Christians and Jews to have amicable interreligious relations with Muslims than with Hindus, Buddhists, or people in the Confucian tradition. Now it would be a great mistake to attribute this difficulty solely or even primarily to so-called Muslim "fundamentalism" (which is probably a pejorative misnomer in any case); in a more basic sense, the difficulty is due to the intense integration of religion with every aspect of culture and society in the Islamic view of the world. Given all this, it is probably fair to say that the prospects for fruitful interreligious conversation are better in North America than in Europe.

While it is important to recognize the religious component in the contemporary pluralistic situation, we must not at the same time imagine that the difficulties of this situation could be resolved if only

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religious people came to a better understanding of each other. Intergroup tensions and conflicts are based on hard vested interests, on ancient and newly invented hatreds, and on emotional and ideological needs, none of which is easily influenced by religious sermonizing, let alone by theological argumentation. Still, there is a certain pragmatic purpose to interreligious dialogue—pragmatic, that is, in helping to reduce tensions through mutual understanding and empathy. While it is to be doubted that this kind of activity has much effect with the more determined bigots, such dialogue is probably useful in reinforcing tolerant attitudes among those already disposed to have them. To that extent, what might be called the "anti-defamation" type of interreligious dialogue is justified. And as for dialogue that has the purpose of extending and deepening scholarly knowledge, no justification is needed; scholarship is a good in itself. Currently it is also very fashionable to engage in interreligious dialogue for the purpose of facilitating cooperation on this or that sociopolitical agenda; if one approves of the agenda—a very large if—then this motive for dialogue is quite acceptable, too.

Finally, however, there is a non-pragmatic motive for engaging in such dialogue that offers by far the most promising challenge to the religious traditions of the West, which is, quite simply, to engage in a renewed search for truth. Obviously, such a statement contains an implicit theological assumption, one that is, broadly speaking, liberal. Which is to say, it will make no sense to any orthodoxy holding to the belief that, short of the *eschaton*, everything has been revealed that is going to be and therefore there is nothing new to be learned of religiously relevant truth—certainly not from such thoroughly non-accredited sources as those that typically come up in interreligious dialogue. I plead guilty: what is to be said herein derives from a position of theological liberalism, more particularly, a Protestant liberalism traceable at least as far back as Friedrich Schleiermacher (in my case with unapologetically Lutheran overtones). Nevertheless, even without this particular theological slant, one can make the case that the encounter with those world religions whose origin lies outside the biblical orbit, notably those of South and East Asia, constitutes an important and most valuable challenge to those of us, Christians and Jews, whose faith is grounded in the biblical revelation. Indeed, this encounter may turn out to be the most important religious challenge of our era.

Advances in our knowledge of truth frequently come from an encounter with people who hold beliefs radically other than our own. The search for religious truth seems to conform to this pattern. The centuries-long drama of the religious journey of the people of Israel, as it is recorded in the Hebrew Bible, was a gigantic struggle with the immensely powerful "other" of the religious world of the ancient Near East. Rabbinic Judaism developed in the differentiation from the typically hostile "other" of Christianity and later of Islam.

And in the history of Christian thought it could be said that there were four "others," each of them supplying a confrontation that proved to be enormously productive. First, of course, there was the confrontation with the world of Hellenism and late classical antiquity, a confrontation out of which an obscure Jewish sect was transformed into a world religion. In the High Middle Ages came two interrelated encounters—the encounter with Islam, first by means of the sword but later, mercifully, by means of the pen, and the encounter with a rediscovered albeit much abbreviated Hellenism (ironically transmitted to the Christian West by largely Muslim and Jewish intermediaries). And for the last two hundred years or so the most absorbing confrontation has been with modernity and modern thought, a confrontation that has become an obsession with large numbers of Christian and Jewish religious thinkers. Tertullian asked the question: "What is Athens to Jerusalem?" And his answer was: "Not a thing!" He was very wrong; it turned out that Athens had a lot to say to Jerusalem, some of which was well worth hearing. The question that we have heard now for many years has been: "What does modernity have to say to Christianity (or to Judaism)?" Again, I think that it has had a lot to say, including some very important insights about the physical universe, human nature, history, and about our knowledge of all of these. It may be, however, that the dialogue with modernity has now exhausted itself, and that the dialogue with the great religions of Asia may offer the next—if you will, the fifth—great encounter.

In the pluralistic situation, like it or not, everybody must sooner or later talk with everyone else. In addition to the endlessly continuing dialogue between every form of religious thought and modernity, one may distinguish a number of circles in the business of interreligious communication. There is the intra-Christian ecumenical dialogue. In recent years it has been heavily burdened by conflicting political agendas, a circumstance that has contributed little of theological interest. There is the dialogue between Jews and Christians. This, too, has had difficulty engaging broad theological issues, since attention has understandably focused on Christian responses to anti-Semitism and to the state of Israel (though, of course, there are theological dimensions to both these topics). Given the present climate in the Islamic world, as already mentioned, interreligious conversation among Muslims, Christians, and Jews is very difficult to get going.

There is, finally, what I have elsewhere called the dialogue between Jerusalem and Benares, between the faiths that descend from the biblical tradition and

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the faiths of South and East Asia. This last seems to me the most promising, not only because under present conditions it is relatively easy, but also because it offers the most challenging questions intellectually. The arguments among the various strands of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, for all the vehemence with which they are carried on, are after all quarrels among spiritual cousins. The fundamental divide among world religions has always run, and still runs, somewhere between the Iranian plateau and India. Jerusalem and Benares represent what are probably the two sharpest alternatives in the religious history of mankind—the city in which the Ark of the Covenant was set down, in which Jesus ended his earthly ministry, and from which Muhammad ascended to heaven—and that other city, where a thousand gods descend into the river at dawn and near which the Buddha preached his first sermon announcing liberation to all sentient beings. Both for practical and for intellectual reasons, it is *this* dialogue that presents the greatest challenge to the people, to borrow the Muslim formulation, whose book is the Bible.

Indeed, not surprisingly, in recent years this has been the dialogue in which most of the action has been taking place, the major part of it in Western countries, some of it in Asia (notably in Japan and in India). Even if one limits one's attention to the period since World War II, one confronts a whole library of books and articles devoted to the discussion between West and East, including the output of numerous conferences, colloquia, official and unofficial commissions (such as those of the Vatican and the World Council of Churches). This literature naturally differs widely in degrees of sophistication and scholarly seriousness, not to mention spiritual depth.

But whatever the differences of level, there is a certain general typology to be discussed here. Like all such typologies, it is imperfect; individuals will resist being so labeled. Yet this typology is moderately useful in distinguishing major Christian positions in the area of interreligious dialogue. There are, broadly, three such positions: the "exclusivist," the "inclusivist," and the "pluralist." "Exclusivists" (a somewhat pejorative term, to be sure, but one that may stick all the same) are people who insist on the finality and uniqueness of biblical revelation. It should be emphasized that this position does not at all imply a lack of respect for or even theological interest in other religious traditions, but it follows the great majority of historic Christian theologies in denying the possibility of salvific revelations anywhere outside the biblical orbit. The title of Carl Braaten's recent book on Christianity and the world religions, *No Other Gospel!*, succinctly and robustly represents this view. "Inclusivists," while also stressing the centrality of biblical revelation, are more willing to allow, if not for "other gospels," then for bits of revelatory truth in places far removed from the Judeo-Christian drama. Theologians influenced by Karl Rahner represent this position quite neatly. Finally, the "pluralists" are those who are prepared to give up on the centrality of biblical revelation, even if they admit that their own access to ultimate reality has been inevitably conditioned by their Christian background and experience. John Hick may be the most original and the most interesting spokesman of the "pluralist" position. His call for a "Copernican revolution" in theology elegantly sums up this approach: Christians must accept the fact that they do not occupy the center of the universe, that their "planet" is but one of several circling the "sun" of ultimate reality.

Let me take the liberty of placing myself within this typology. Of course I too don't like being labeled, but the label "inclusivist" would come closest. This position is very much related to my overall understanding of religious existence in the age of pluralism. Put as simply as one can put it, this position tries to reconcile the acute tension between two pivotal insights. The first is what I have called the "heretical imperative," to wit: the pluralistic situation forces us to choose, and every religious affirmation we then make is the result of choice, even if we choose this or that orthodoxy. Put differently, it becomes very difficult to say innocently, "we believe"; even if we use such words, what we are really saying is, "*I* have chosen to identify with this *we*." The second insight is that I must remain faithful to my own experience, even though I know this experience to be relativized by my historical and social location. If I have once been overcome by what I clearly experienced and understood as truth, then I will adhere to this truth even as I comprehend its sociohistorical *Sitz im Leben*. For example, even if I realize that modern physical science has been a by-product of the development of industrial capitalism in the West and that, say, classical China had a view of reality that was just as sophisticated but very different indeed—even then, having "located" both, I will accord cognitive priority to modern science over, say, the worldview of Taoist divination.

The first insight makes it impossible for me to be "exclusivist," the second to be "pluralist." The "exclusivist" position—and in this, of course, it represents every form or orthodoxy or traditionalism—is based on an absolute commitment to one particular set of truth claims. It is impossible not to find such a position appealing, especially in an intellectual milieu characterized by so much wimpishness; who would not wish, at least sometimes, to be the blessed possessor of serene and absolute certitude? Alas, such certitude is unavailable to those of us persuaded by the logic of the heretical imperative.

But the second insight, the one about having to remain faithful to my own adventures with truth,

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precludes my joining the "pluralists." There is an intellectual seductiveness to the idea of one blazing sun of truth, seen imperfectly from different viewing points in human history, with the perception becoming ever more ample as the different views are correlated and added up. The trouble is that the different views are not only partial but contradictory—or some of them are. They cannot readily be put together into a better picture like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle; some of them belong to *different pictures*. If one piece of a picture is deemed true by me, I can of course try to correlate it with pieces held by other people. But when it becomes clear that my piece belongs to a picture of, say, the Battle of Waterloo while the other's piece belongs in a picture of three little girls playing with a kitten, it would be a senseless project to try to put these pieces together as part of the same jigsaw puzzle. And thus, unable to be either "exclusivist" or "pluralist," I suppose that I am stuck with the middle position—never a very satisfying place to be, but in this matter one to which I have no available alternative.

These considerations lead us to the main methodological problem in the field of interreligious dialogue. Leaving aside the "exclusivists" (who for obvious reasons are a small minority among those engaged in this process), the usual approach is one of searching for agreements. That is, there will be an assertion that element A in tradition X agrees, or can be construed as being eventually agreeable with, element B in tradition Y. Now, there is nothing intrinsically invalid about this procedure. It can lead to interesting insights. Perhaps the classic case of this is Rudolf Otto's comparison of Meister Eckhart with Shankara, in his book *Mysticism East and West*. Unless one wants to assume that Otto grossly mistranslated or misinterpreted the two sets of texts, one is left with the unavoidable impression that their authors are talking about essentially the same experience. Indeed, at times it seems as if Eckhart had just translated Shankara's Sanskrit into Latin or medieval German, or that Shankara had done the reverse translation. It is no accident that this procedure works best with mystics, or more specifically with those who practiced what William James called the "mysticism of infinity" in which self, world, and divinity merge in ecstasy (which James called, with a sort of Harvard understatement, an "oceanic feeling"). And there is strong empirical evidence that there is indeed a universal human experience of this sort. To be sure, it is reported on and theorized about in a variety of ways that are crucially influenced by the reporter's or theorist's own religious and cultural prejudices. But the contours of the cross-culturally available experience are fairly clear. There is, then, a considerable group of people in the field of interreligious studies whose activities could be summarized in a slogan of "Mystics of all nations unite, you have nothing to lose but your differentiations." But mysticism is only a relatively small area within the vast array of human religion. Unless one wants to take the position that mysticism is the only genuine form of religious experience (a position for which one finds no warrant), this one-sided focus cannot be justified.

In any case, the real methodological issue here is wider. The search for agreements on the part of people who are by the very definition of their enterprise hoping to find such agreements before they start out violates a basic canon of scientific reasoning: the conscientious researcher does not go out to find evidence in support of his hypotheses, but looks for evidence that would falsify them. Now, one could of course say that interreligious studies (or, if you prefer, comparative theology) should not be considered a science, so that this canon does not apply. Perhaps. But more is involved here than some abstract principle of scientific rationality. All of us, whatever we call ourselves, are vulnerable to wishful thinking; intellectual integrity requires that we safeguard ourselves against this danger as best we can. *That* is the final reason why we should look first for whatever would seem to disappoint our intellectual expectations. Thus I would suggest an opposite focus for the enterprise of comparing religions, namely that the focus should be on the *disagreements*.

The next important step would then involve the question of what one makes of these disagreements. Taking one's stand with absolute commitment in one tradition and one only the disagreements would then be understood as marking the boundary between truth and error. So much for the "exclusivists." The "pluralists" no doubt tend to avoid such disagreements as much as possible—which is a principal difficulty with them. I would opt for the in-between ("inclusivist," if you must) procedure of taking the disagreements one by one and then, in each instance, trying to make a judgment call.

Three judgment calls are theoretically possible. The first is that there is indeed a disagreement here between what I believe and what "they" believe; I'm firmly committed to my own belief and I will therefore, at least tentatively, assume that "they" are in error. The second is that the disagreement may be one in appearance only; I will try to find ways by which the two beliefs might be reconciled. Number three is that "their" position in this disagreement is so plausible that, albeit reluctantly, I must set about modifying my own position. The third possibility, of course, is the most painful one. Unless one is in principle willing to entertain this possibility, however, one's engagement in the dialogue is less than serious.

In the case of the religious traditions of South and East Asia, they precisely represent challenges to the radical monotheism of the West. While these challenges can be and have been put forward in highly

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sophisticated theoretical propositions, it is first of all very important to remind ourselves that religion is not primarily a matter of theory. At the heart of every religious tradition lies a specific experience of what is deemed to be reality, indeed ultimate reality; the theories always come later, as people reflect about their own or earlier generations' experiences. That is why comparative theology (to use the term that is now gaining currency) should always be grounded in a comparative phenomenology of religion; otherwise it will be a rather sterile encounter of abstractions.

The first challenge to Western monotheism is the experience of the *mythological matrix*. One of the striking findings of modern scholarship in religion is the enormous similarity if not identity of the experiences of the world of archaic peoples. Anywhere in the world, if one goes back far enough, one comes upon a worldview that can be described quite adequately as mythological—that is, one comes upon a world that is permeated with sacred, divine forces. The primordial universality of this worldview suggests the term "matrix." Modern interpreters of archaic religion as diverse as Lucien Levy-Bruhl and Eric Voegelin have found this phenomenon, though of course they have differed in their theories about it.

We would be gravely mistaken to understand this phenomenon as somehow obsolete, as a sort of infantile stage in the development of human consciousness. As Voegelin has pointed out, this mythological world has been ruptured in a number of decisive historical events—notably in ancient Israel, Greece, India, and China (probably also in ancient Iran, perhaps in other places). This historical fact, though, by no means implies that the mythological worldview has been finally made impossible, is "finished" or *aufgehoben*. It has shown remarkable survival power over the ages, it is replicated ever again in the worlds of childhood and of dreams, and it is an object of persistent nostalgia. But more important for our present considerations, it survives with enormous vitality both in the popular religiosity and in the highly sophisticated intellectual traditions of all Asian countries. The root experience here is classically caught in the exclamation of Thales of Miletus: "The world is full of gods!" We come on this same experience in popular Hinduism (the proverbial "three hundred thousand gods of India"), in the folk religious of East Asia, in Taoism and Shinto, and even in what first strikes one as the cool secularity of Confucian philosophy (a first impression that in my opinion is somewhat mistaken).

The mythological matrix is characterized by fluid, permeable boundaries between the realms of men, of nature, and of the gods. In other words, it is characterized by "wholeness." The radical rupture of this world that took place in ancient Israel and is at the root of the biblical tradition almost certainly served to reinforce these boundaries. The first commandment given to Moses on Sinai ratified a radical polarity between God and man, and it purged nature of all its divine mediations. Creator, creation, and creatures became separate, distinct entities—a rupture of truly cosmic import. The tensions brought about by this rupture have been felt, and resisted, from its beginnings—in the recurrent lapses within Israel into the polytheistic orgiastics of the surrounding cultures, in a long catalogue of Christian and Jewish heresies, down to the most recent denunciations of Judaeo-Christian "pathology" by radical feminist and environmentalist theologians, and in the nostalgia for the consolations of the primordial "wholeness" which is a crucial element in the attraction that Asian religions have evoked among some Westerners. To repeat: the mythological matrix is by no means "finished"; it can be regained today, as it was regained many times in the past. What can *not* be done is to revoke the rupture and still preserve the essence of the biblical revelation. The disagreement, the contradiction, is far too radical for that.

This insight, though, does not preclude some searching questions. Must the experience of the mythological matrix simply be relegated to the categories of error or idolatry in a Christian or Jewish perspective? Must all the radiant gods of Hinduism (and, for that matter, other pantheons) be so relegated? The life-forces of the tao? The institutions of Japanese nature-mysticism? And if one answers these or similar questions negatively, *without* then concluding that the entire stream of religious experience and thought that originated in Israel's exodus from the world of the gods was one gigantic mistake, then another question obtrudes: How can the experience of the mythological matrix be understood in biblical terms, but in such a way that its claim to truth is not entirely negated?

The second challenge of the religions of South and East Asia is their experience of emptiness. This experience, of course, confronts us in the sharpest and also the most theoretically intriguing way in Buddhism, in the accounts of *nirvana, an-atta, shunyata, satori*. These accounts are not monolithic, and quite different bodies of theoretical explication have been built from them (as between Theravada and Mahayana schools of thought). But the accounts nevertheless do suggest a common experience, one not dissimilar to the universal experience of the "mysticism of infinity" to which reference was made earlier. Here too the boundaries between self, world, and the sacred are weakened, and in the extreme case obliterated. The final experience is of *oneness*, and that experience has the character of redemptive bliss—the "inconceivable liberation," in the phrase of Vimalakirti. But the oneness of this experience is significantly different from the wholeness of mythological existence. That is to say, the plenitude of the

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mythological universe—full of gods, galaxies of beings, pulsating vitality and variety—is totally collapsed into a great silence; plenitude becomes emptiness, indeed is now disclosed as having been emptiness all along.

We do not know whether this experience is as old in human history as that of the mythological cosmos. Archaeologists of the pre-Aryan Indus civilization have found statuettes of individuals in the lotus position of yoga meditation, which suggests the great antiquity of the phenomenon, at least in India. Be that as it may, the phenomenon, in one form or another, has recurringly erupted within Judaism and Christianity from early times on (probably, if one follows Gershom Scholem, from before the beginning of the Christian era). And, invariably, it has entered into conflict with those who upheld the integrity of biblical faith. Frequently the religious authorities simply condemned those who claimed or propagated this experience. Even Meister Eckhart had some of his writings condemned by the church—luckily for him after his death. There were many others less lucky, such as the great Sufi mystic al-Hallaj, who was executed for blasphemy after running through the streets of Basra shouting *"ana'l-haqq"*—literally, "I am the truth"—the statement having been interpreted by the authorities, probably correctly, as meaning "I am God." But there were others who tried to reconcile the insights coming out of this experience with the monotheistic affirmations of biblical faith—such as Isaac Luria, the principal theorist of the Safad school of the Kabbalah; or Bonaventure, who sought to retain the speculations of radical Franciscanism within the fold of Catholic orthodoxy; or al-Ghazzali, whose intellectual lifework was the intellectual integration of the Sufi experience with orthodox Islam.

Once again, we have the option of rejecting outright this undercurrent of Judeo-Christian history, and all its Asian analogues, as aberrations, errors, even blasphemy. Alternatively, we can try to seek answers to questions that arise if we concede some validity to this experience. For instance, how can the experience of emptiness be reconciled with the fullness of God and His creation? What is the relation between God's speech and God's silence? Does one precede the other—and if so, in what sequence—or are both only seeming contradictions in the mystery of God's being? Is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, somehow present in the depths of *shunyata*—and if so, in what way? Can we imagine any of the Hebrew prophets, or Jesus, or Paul, in the lotus position? What, for us today, is the difference between prayer and meditation? Is it possible to do both?

Finally, there is the third challenge: the experience of other particular revelations. The faiths originating in western Asia, in contrast with much that transpired further east, insist on what to, say, a Chinese mind are mind-boggling historical particularities, notably in the particularisms of God's dealings with the people of Israel and of God's incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. As biblical scholars have been able to show, Israel radically historicized every element of Near Eastern religion that it absorbed into its canon; a look at its calendar of feasts shows the thoroughly particularistic and historicized character of Israel's understanding of the "great deeds of the Lord." The same historical particularity of course pertains to the New Testament accounts of Jesus, down to the creedal affirmation that this Jesus was "crucified under Pontius Pilate"—an intersection of divine infinity with the most precisely finite realities of human history. Now, much of South and East Asian religion lacks this kind of particularism, and a number of modern Hindu and Buddhist authors have pointed to this as a mark of superiority over the putatively cruder religions of the West. However, scattered throughout the vast territory of non-biblical religions, especially in Asia, there are accounts of particular revelations—hierophanies or *avatars*, if you will—that can vie with the particularism of Jewish and Christian faith. The sharpest particularistic challenge, of course, is that posed by Islam. Based on the same monotheistic foundations as its two rival "cousins," Islam makes comparably particularistic claims about the status of Muhammad, of the Quran, and of the sacred law instituted by the Prophet. But there are particularisms in South and East Asia as well—claims of particular revelations, that is—notably in the *bhakti* versions of Hinduism and in various Mahayana movements. Any attempt to accept these claims, even partially, within a Jewish or Christian frame of reference will very likely be harder than the effort to meet the first two challenges in an affirmative manner.

Still, the questions can be posed: If God chose Israel, could He have chosen any other people—and if so, how are these two elections related to each other? If God was in Christ, could He also have been in other human bearers of revelation—and if so, what would be the status of the latter in a Christian understanding of the Incarnation? Can there be, in the title of one of Raimundo Panikkar's books, an "unknown Christ of Hinduism"? Presumably no Christian will readily understand the historical Jesus as but one of many *avatars* of God, but is that the end of the argument? Is there any way in which a Jew or a Christian could understand God as speaking in the Quran?

Let me confess that I have posed questions to which I do not know the answers. But I do believe that there are resources within the rich history of Jewish and Christian thought with which we can at least begin to address them. I also believe that no such questions are ever answered conclusively in this world. However, the encounter with the religions of

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Asia raises them in a newly urgent way. In this sense, Asia can become an enormously promising "other," with which and against which the self-understanding of Christian and Jewish faith can only gain. There is here a formidable, but also an exciting, theological agenda. FT

The Summer of 1883

Oh, they chose, all right.
This is the New World:
no guarantee, but opportunity.
In one summer three crops,
like beautiful daughters,
have eloped with death's sons.
One with grasshoppers,
one with drought, and one with hail.
Now they have no seed corn.
On their husk pallets
the children who remain
turn in the prison
of their thin ribs.
It's only a matter of time
before the father will
have to take up the saw
and build another coffin.
By light of a candle
the mother washes the entrails
of a wild duck.
In the black cellar of its stomach
she discovers corn
new as morning,
enough to plant.
Look. She holds it up
in the dark bag of her hand,
another opportunity.
She looms tall as a church steeple.
She is holding the sun
in its vast pouch of space.

Jeanne Murray Walker

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The Illusion of Moral Neutrality

J. Budziszewski

I

Nietzsche claimed that if men took God seriously, they would still be burning heretics at the stake. In the same spirit, one supposes, are the notions that if men really cherished moral truth, they would suppress all beliefs that they considered wrong, and that if men still cared about the sanctity of the marriage bed, they would go back to making adulterers wear the scarlet A.

Today two different groups of people agree with conditional statements of this sort. In the first group are the ordinary bigots, who are always among us. The second are a kind of modern backlash—call it the reaction—found principally among the "cultural elite." For instance, whereas the bigots respond to Nietzsche's conditional by saying, "Yes, that's why we should burn heretics," the reactionaries respond to it by saying, "No, that's why we should suppress the public expression of belief in God."

These reactionaries claim to love tolerance, but, misunderstanding it, they strangle it in their embrace. Their creed is that intolerance is born at the same moment as public moral commitments; that morality must therefore be a "private" affair; that in order to say that tolerance is a good, we must forbear to say aloud that anything else is good or evil. Their god is Neutrality. In certain intellectual regions he travels under other names such as Autonomy and Rights.

We meet this jealous and negating god on the philosophic right, where conservatives like Michael Oakeshott tell us that the specific and limited activity of "governing" has "nothing to do" with natural law or morals. We encounter him on the philosophic left, where liberals like John Rawls and Marxists like Jürgen Habermas invent devices like the Veil of Ignorance and the Ideal Speech Situation to convince us that if we wish to understand truly the principles of justice, we must pretend to forget not only who we are, but also everything we ever thought we knew about good and evil. We meet this god in law, where many jurists treat ethical distinctions such as "family" vs. "non-family" as "invidious classifications" that deny citizens the equal protection of the law. We meet him in education, where elementary school children are offered books like *Daddy's Roommate, Heather Has Two Mommies*, and *Gloria Goes to Gay Pride*. In fact, we meet this god everywhere: in the university, in the movie theatre, in many churches and synagogues, and, it goes without saying, on the even more ubiquitous altar of the television.

It might seem remarkable that people who insist that tolerance means moral neutrality should themselves be so earnest in ridiculing those who aren't neutral. But of course, they themselves aren't neutral either. The scandal of Neutrality is that its worshipers cannot answer the question "Why be neutral?" without committing themselves to particular goods—social peace, self-expression, self-esteem, ethnic pride, or what have you—thereby violating their own desideratum of Neutrality. Yet even this is merely a symptom of a deeper problem, namely, *there is no such thing as Neutrality*. It isn't merely unachievable, like a perfect circle; it is unthinkable and unapproachable, like a square circle. Whether we deem it better to take a stand or be silent, we've offended this god in the very act of deeming.

To see the folly of neutralism is one thing; to escape from it is another. Many who understand perfectly well that tolerance cannot be defended by suspending judgment about goods and evils have difficulty defending it in any other way. They suspect the worst: that if neutrality is a square circle, then so is

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tolerance, along with all of its component virtues like objectivity and fairness. They fear that by leaving the reactionaries, they will join with the ordinary bigots. They are right to fear this trap, but make the difficulty of avoiding it greater than it is.

II

Properly understood, what is this thing called tolerance? What does it really demand of us? What do we need in order to come by it? Let's see if we can work this out.

The truth is, we already know the answer in part. To tolerate something is to put up with it even though we might be tempted to suppress it. The next step, then: which things are we tempted to suppress? Here, too, we know the answer: we are tempted to suppress those things that we deem mistaken, painful, wrong, harmful, offensive, or in some other way unworthy of approval.

Now, we use the term "temptation" when our hearts solicit us either to do something we ought not do or to forbear from doing something we ought to do. But *shouldn't* we suppress the things that we deem mistaken, painful, wrong, harmful, offensive, and so on? The answer is, sometimes we should, and sometimes we shouldn't. For instance, it's certainly not acceptable to tolerate the act of rape. But it is certainly right to put up with the profession, by rational argument, of opinions that we deem mistaken.

What makes these two cases different? In one respect, of course, they are just the same. Whichever we endeavored to suppress—rape, or the profession of false opinions—we would presumably be trying to avert particular evils, or, if you prefer, to protect particular goods. The goods that are injured in the act of rape include the dignity of the woman, her physical and emotional well-being, and the integrity of a certain pattern of relationships between men and women, a pattern that depends on trust rather than fear. Similarly the goods that are injured in the act of professing false opinions include the clear knowledge of the truth, the public recognition of its value, and the integrity of a certain pattern of conduct, a pattern that depends on right judgment rather than error. By suppressing rape we would be trying to protect the first set of goods; by suppressing the profession of false opinions, the latter.

And so it is with every case. People may not agree about what is good and what is evil; or they may be mistaken about what is good and what is evil. They may even call evil good, and good, evil. But every time someone wants to suppress something, we can be sure he is attempting to prevent what he thinks, rightly or wrongly, to be evil; alternately, to protect something he thinks, rightly or wrongly, to be good. Why, then—to return to the question—do we sometimes tolerate an evil, or put up with an injury to a good?

The answer is not, as some people hold, skepticism. Take the case of conducting a debate, a practice notorious for tolerating the evil of false opinions. There are three kinds of skeptics: the utter skeptic, who is in doubt about all things; the partial skeptic, who is in doubt about some things; and the non-skeptic, who is in doubt about nothing whatsoever. Can the utter skeptic say, "Because all is in doubt, all should be heard"? No, he has rather to say, "The rightness of hearing and the rightness of silencing are equally in doubt; I cannot tell you which to choose." Can the partial skeptic say, "I don't believe in debate"? Yes, but he might instead say, "I am in doubt about what is true in general. But I'm sure that truth is good, I'm sure that exchange of discursive reasoning will help to find it, and I'm sure about the kind of manners that such exchange requires." And third, can the non-skeptic say, "To put up with falsehood is wrong"? Yes, but he might instead say this: "Although I am sure of every truth, one such truth is that the exercise of rebutting error will sharpen the insight I already possess, and another is that it may convert my opponent." We see that only the non-skeptic and the partial skeptic can deal with debate. Neither does it because of what he doubts; each does it because of what he doesn't doubt. Each tolerates falsehood for the sake of truth.

Once we see this, the real reason that we sometimes tolerate evils or put up with injuries to good becomes clear: We do it to prevent graver evils, or to advance greater goods. For there is a certain paradox in this business of suppressing evils: the act of suppression itself may give rise to evils. In fact it often does. Because this is so, we must always put the two evils, the evil that suppression engenders and the evil that it prevents, on a scale. When the evil that suppression engenders equals or exceeds the evil that it prevents, we ought to put up with the thing in question instead of suppressing it.

This paradox is the very basis of the virtue of tolerance. But on closer examination we see that there are two cases, in one of which the paradox is more pronounced than the other.

The less paradoxical case is one in which the goods that are protected by suppression and those injured by suppression are different. For example, at the same time that we consider suppressing the profession of false opinions for the sake of truth, we might consider tolerating their profession for the sake of peace. Truth and peace are both goods, but of course they are not the same good. First we have to decide which of the two goods is of higher order, because that one trumps the other. If they are of the same order, then we must resort to judgments of degree. One need not suppose that judgment has mathematical precision; only that there is such a thing as judgment.

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In the other, more paradoxical, case, the goods that are protected by suppression and the goods that are injured by suppression are the same. For example, at the same time that we consider suppressing the profession of false opinions for the sake of truth, we might consider tolerating their profession—at least their profession by rational argument—also for the sake of truth. On the side of suppression we might plead, "After all, the opinions in question are false, aren't they? Then isn't it a gain to get rid of them?" But on the side of toleration, we might ask, "But what better engine have we for honing truth than to try it against error in a fair fight?" In this case we don't have to decide which of two goods is of higher order, because there is only one good at issue. But we do have to compare different hypotheses about what really promotes that good.

Each of these cases reveals a different element in the practice of tolerance: the first, in which the good that suppression protects is different from the one it injures, holds up right judgment in the protection of greater ends against lesser ends; the second, in which the goods protected by suppression and injured by suppression are the same, holds up right judgment in the protection of ends against mistaken means.

In the end, element two goes more to the heart of the matter. The ends with which a given end comes into conflict are largely a matter of circumstance. The question of by which means a given end cannot, by its nature, be pursued, is a constant.

If the constant element in the practice of tolerance is right judgment in the protection of ends against mistaken means, then the constant element in intolerance is false judgment in the protection of ends against mistaken means.

Right away we see that intolerance shows itself in two different ways, for we can err in either of two different directions. One way is by an excess of indulgence—putting up with something we should suppress. Let's call this the error of softheadedness. The other way that we can err is by a deficiency of indulgence—suppressing what we should put up with. Let's call this the error of narrowmindedness. Each of these two opposite errors is a deviation from true tolerance; each of them therefore has the same claim to the name of "intolerance."

This may at first sound odd, because our language has so far reserved the word "intolerance" for narrowmindedness. By contrast, consider courage, which is easier to talk about than tolerance. Although we do sometimes forget that rashness as well as cowardice is opposed to true courage, at least we aren't burdened by a term, say "in-courage," that could be applied only to cowardice and not to rashness. It seems that either we prefer the error of softheadedness to the error of narrowmindedness, or else we don't realize that softheadedness is an error at all. But this is a deep confusion. It is just as much a deviation from true tolerance to put up with rape as it is to suppress the profession of false opinions advanced by rational argument.

Thus far we have three possibilities: two kinds of wrong judgment in the protection of ends against mistaken means, and one kind of right judgment in the protection of ends against mistaken means. Expressed in this way, what we have are three points that appear to be floating in space. Of course there is a flaw in this mental diagram. The three need to be arranged along a continuum which is bounded by two extremes, the one excessive, the one deficient; the one softheaded, the other narrowminded. Because just how indulgent we are toward something—just how much we put up with it, just where we fall between the two extremes—is a matter of degree. For instance, we might make some act a crime. Or we might shun those who do it, but without going so far as criminalization. Or we might try to persuade the wrongdoers to change their ways without going so far as to shun them. Or we might ignore them. Or we might encourage them. We might even reward them. The truly tolerant point will always be somewhere between the two endpoints of the continuum, its location depending on the act in question and on the circumstances. But precisely where it is along this line will vary. The location of true tolerance can be determined only by the exercise of case-by-case judgment about the goods and the evils involved. Just as true courage is a mean between rashness and cravenness, and true friendliness is a mean between obsequiousness and boorishness, so true tolerance is a mean between softheadedness and narrowmindedness.

This leads us to the following propositions. (1) Tolerance cannot be neutral about what is good, for its very purpose is to guard goods and avert evils.

(2) Tolerance is not a moral rule, a moral attitude, a moral feeling, or a moral capacity, but a moral virtue. Further, although tolerance is not one of the moral virtues that Aristotle discussed, it is a moral virtue of the Aristotelian type. For it is a mean between two opposed vices, one of them characterized by excess and the other by deficiency, its location to be discovered in the case-by-case exercise of practical wisdom.

(3) The circumstantial element in the practice of tolerance is right judgment in the protection of greater ends against lesser ends. This is no different from any exercise of practical wisdom, except insofar as its constant element, right judgment in the protection of ends against mistaken means, makes it special.

To be sure, this is only a *formal* answer to the question of what tolerance is. It directs us toward the exercise of practical wisdom—of well-founded judgment about the goods and evils involved in putting up

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with things. To give a *substantive* answer to the question of what tolerance is, however, would be no small matter; even if one had the necessary wisdom to do it, the space of a single article could never suffice.

Still, the merely formal definition of tolerance does do certain work for us. For instance:

The fact that tolerance is a moral virtue of the Aristotelian type tells us a great deal about its relation to the others. For those of us who wonder how, if at all, tolerance might be taught, this relation carries powerful implications.

In addition, religion presents the acid test for tolerance. For the loyalty that it concerns is ultimate; if tolerance cannot survive it, then tolerance cannot survive. However, the special role of tolerance in protecting ends against mistaken means gives us the one clue we need to unscrew this inscrutable.

Explaining the first of these two points is the burden of the next section. Explaining the second is the burden of the last.

III

All moral virtues—or at the very least those of the Aristotelian type—are interdependent. The classical demonstration of this truth, which derives from Thomas Aquinas, pivots on the relation of these virtues to practical wisdom. For every moral virtue depends on practical wisdom; hence if practical wisdom is impaired, then every moral virtue is impaired. But on the other side, practical wisdom depends on every moral virtue; hence if any moral virtue is impaired, practical wisdom is impaired. It follows, then, that through practical wisdom, a flaw in any moral virtue entails a flaw in every other.

Think, by way of illustration, of the virtue of courage. Courage involves a mean between fear and daring—as we said before, enough fear to avoid being rash, enough daring to avoid being craven. But because the right balance between fear and daring varies from case to case, the habit of courage must be informed by practical wisdom. But how, on the other side, does practical wisdom depend on every moral virtue? Again, consider courage. In thinking of its exercises, our imaginations usually go no further than pain and death. Aristotle himself thought no evil could be greater. But this is false: to be held in contempt is more fearful, and vice, if it is not, certainly ought to be. To achieve practical wisdom, one needs enough fear to be vigilant of error and enough daring to risk it in pursuit of truth. To hold onto such wisdom, one needs enough fear to dread its loss and enough daring to risk contempt in its defense.

The same relation exists between practical wisdom and every other moral virtue. Using a bicycle wheel as our model, the moral virtues are to spokes as practical wisdom is to the hub. We all know what happens when we use a bicycle wheel with a damaged spoke. Before long, the others give in, too, and the wheel gets more and more out of true. This is the classical thesis of the unity of the virtues. If one virtue bends, then every virtue bends.

Everyday experience corroborates this. We don't even have to go through the hub, for without implying their equality we may say that all the moral virtues are connected at the rim. Tolerance is addled in the unfriendly man; friendship is addled in the dishonest man; honesty is addled in the unjust man; justice is addled in the loveless man; love is addled in the hopeless man; hope is addled in the impatient man; and patience is addled in the intolerant man. So the wheel is closed.

Thus tolerance is one of the moral virtues, and depends on all the rest of them. This has implications for the cultivation of tolerant citizens. How so? The unity of the virtues works in only one direction. That is, while impairment of one moral virtue entails impairment of all the rest, progress toward one moral virtue does not in and of itself entail progress toward all the rest. Think of the bicycle wheel again. Beginning with a perfect round, bending one spoke will soon bend all the others, too, but straightening one spoke of a crushed wheel will not simply pull the others back in true. In fact it may cause some spokes to bend even more. With damaged bicycle wheels, there are three alternatives. We can replace the wheel; we can take it apart, straighten each part separately, and put it back together; or we can leave it in one piece and straighten every part at once. With a soul, the first two alternatives are out of the question because we can neither replace it nor take it apart. The only alternative is to leave it in one piece and straighten every part at once.

Here is what follows: if all the virtues depend on one another, then tolerance cannot be taught unless all the rest are taught as well. We cannot compensate for the collapse of all our virtues by teaching tolerance and letting the rest go by, as some educators and social critics seem to think; the only cure for moral collapse is moral renewal, on all fronts simultaneously.

That is a hard adage. For even with crushed wheels, the simultaneous straightening of every spoke is hardly thinkable. With crushed souls—which is what we all are—we've no idea how our own efforts might bring it to pass. More than education, we need redemption. For virtues are complicated things: complex dispositions of character, deeply ingrained "habits," by which one calls upon all of his passions and capacities of mind in just those ways that aid, prompt, focus, inform, and execute his moral choices instead of clouding them, misleading them, or obstructing their execution. This means that virtues cannot be imparted just by encouraging certain feelings or developing certain capacities; feelings and capacities are instruments of the virtues, not their realization.

What adds to the difficulty is that virtues are much

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more than readiness to follow the rules. There are, of course, some rules that are true in all circumstances. Murder is always wrong. But virtues are more like a fitness to distinguish true rules from false, and to choose rightly even where there are no rules or where the rules are no more than rules of thumb and seem to contradict each other. To be sure, if rules are applied judiciously, they can help to restrain the most obvious evils. And this in turn is bound to help in the nurture of virtue. But virtue cannot, as we have said, be taught simply by means of an exhaustive list of rules. Not only would such a list be endless, but the vicious would rebel before we even reached the second page.

In sum, we aren't going to transmit the virtue of tolerance through a quick fix, like a Freshman Orientation Weekend; through a long fix, like a three-volume set of workplace sensitivity regulations; or through a false fix, like a Children of the Rainbow Curriculum. If Plato was right that justice is medicine for the soul, then such instrumentalities are its patent medicine: 5 percent poison, 10 percent flavoring, 85 percent intoxicating spirits, and pure delusion from the first to the last.

IV

Time now to turn to the question of religious tolerance, where even the rules are far from easy to discern.

What is religion anyway? Some people say that all religions depend on faith, while all secularisms depend on reason. But as Chesterton remarked in *Orthodoxy*, "It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. Reason is itself a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all." Other people say that all religions believe in God, while all secularisms do not. But though Buddhists do not believe in God, yet we call Buddhism a religion.

Still others, like Tillich and Niebuhr, hold the mark of religion to be the practice of *ultimate concern* that orders all other concerns, *unconditioned loyalty* that trumps all other loyalties. Here we finally hit the mark. For Christians, the ultimate concern is the saving God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who has revealed himself in Messiah. Though Buddhists do not believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, much less in Messiah, they do have an ultimate concern—escape from suffering, inherent in desire, which, they hold, springs in turn from the illusion of existence.

But if religion is the practice of ultimate concern, then we have another problem. In the first place, even a secularism may be the practice of an ultimate concern. We acknowledge this, for instance, by calling Leninism a religion; similarly we say of a greedy man that "his god is money" and call misplaced devotion "idolatry." In the second place, even among those secularisms that do not go so far as to identify ultimate concerns, none is without implications as to what could, or could not, count as an ultimate concern. John Stuart Mill could never decide which, if any, of the "permanent interests of man as a progressive being" was deserving of unconditioned loyalty. But one thing he was sure of, that Messiah was not among them.

What all this tells us is that "religious" and "secular" constitute a false dichotomy. We would do better with a trichotomy. An acknowledged religion like Christianity or Buddhism posits an ultimate concern and admits it. An unacknowledged religion like Leninism posits an ultimate concern but denies that so doing is religious. And an incomplete religion like Millianism has not finished ranking its concerns.

Incomplete religion can live only in the dream-world of thought. In the light of day it must become complete or die. For in every life or way of life—whether lived simply, lived with the guidance of an ethical theory, or even lived in defiance of an ethical theory—given enough time, some concern eventually emerges as paramount. Eventually there is something to which every knee bows. This is the person's god. As a matter of theory, one may deny that any concern deserves ultimacy. But as a matter of practice, no one escapes ceding ultimacy to something, whether it deserves ultimacy or not. Choices between incompatible urgencies are unavoidable. To prevent the rise of one or another of these urgencies to supremacy, a person would have to practice a truly Stoic discipline of contradiction—and in the end we would have to ask what urgency he served in so disordering himself. In short, one need not be conscious of his god, or even conscious that he has a god. One might think he has no god, or that he is "looking for" or "waiting for" a god. One may even be converted from one god to another. But one will have a god—or at least be on the road to having one.

With all of this ultimate concern floating about, how can there be religious tolerance at all? The answer is, there can't be—unless one's ultimate concern commands it, or at least allows it. For in this case and this case alone, tolerance toward other claimants to ultimacy is obedience to one's own.

Thus St. Hilary of Poitiers: "God does not want unwilling worship, nor does He require a forced repentance." The idea is that although God demands and deserves our unconditioned loyalty, He is of such a nature that nothing exacted by threats could truly serve Him. For He desires sons and daughters, not slaves: His love is inexorable and consumes everything contrary to itself. This is not the Kantian idea that choice is lovable but rather the Christian idea that love is chosen. I do not say that His supposed followers have always practiced the loving tolerance He demands. I do say that intolerance stands under His judgment.

But notice: the same consuming fire that for its

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own sake demands tolerance, for its own sake sets the limits to what is tolerated. If Hilary was right that God does not want unwilling worship, then Hilary's tolerance must be absolute with respect to permitting belief in other gods. This does not mean permitting every act of service to these gods. Hilary must claim the right to say that there are evil services which nothing deserving of unconditioned loyalty could demand, and the correlative right to try to stop anyone who attempts them. For instance, whatever claims of conscience Hilary may honor he cannot permit a person to plead them in justification of murder. "God told me to kill anyone who got in my way" cuts no ice with him; nor is the case different when other ultimate concerns, other gods, are pleaded in place of God. The Defense of the Revolution, The Greater God of the Whole, The Purity of the Race, the Hunger of Moloch, The Right to Control One's Body—neither these nor any other claimants to ultimacy are accepted as justifying the sacrifice of innocents. "Even conceding your God-given right to be left alone by me in your honor to another god," I imagine Hilary saying, "that right concerns your own soul only. I will not permit you, in its service, to inflict injuries which my own God abhors and forbids."

My example is Christian because I am a Christian. But the logic works just the same if you posit some other ultimate concern, some other god than mine. For instance, the god of the Benthamite utilitarian is "aggregate pleasure." Hence if the Benthamite could tolerate other creeds at all, such tolerance would be both ordained and limited by the requirements of such pleasure. Likewise, religious tolerance for the Millian utilitarian would be both ordained and limited by the nature of man's "permanent interests" as a "progressive being," and religious tolerance for the Leninist would be both ordained and limited by the needs of "proletarian dictatorship."

One might suppose that this logic works only for so-called teleological creeds, said to give priority to achieving the good over doing the right. This is not so. No recent writer has more sternly insisted on the priority of right over good than John Rawls. Yet even he has an ultimate concern. His concern is "autonomy," the conditions for the realization of which are supposedly determined by choices made behind a Veil of Ignorance that obliterates personal memory. But the conclusion is obvious: For the Rawlsian, religious tolerance is both ordained and limited by what people could want who no longer remembered the love of God.

Where does all this leave us? The bottom line is that Neutrality is no more coherent in the matter of religious tolerance than it is in tolerance of any other sort. What you can tolerate pivots on your ultimate concern. Because different ultimate concerns ordain different zones of tolerance, social consensus is possible only at the points where these zones overlap. Note well: The greater the resemblance of contending concerns, the greater the overlap of their zones of tolerance. The less the resemblance of contending concerns, the less the overlap of their zones of tolerance. Should contending concerns become sufficiently unlike, their zones of tolerance no longer intersect at all. Consensus vanishes.

This, I believe, is our current trajectory. The embattled term "culture war" is not inflammatory; it is merely exact. And we can expect the war to grow worse. The reason for this is that our various gods ordain not only different zones of tolerance, but different norms to regulate the dispute among themselves. True tolerance is not well tolerated. For although the God of some of the disputants ordains that they love and persuade their opponents, the gods of some of the others ordain no such thing. FT

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The Old New Criticism and its Critics

R. V. Young

Among the pugnacious practitioners of academic literary studies, who agree among themselves on almost nothing, there is one consensus: the New Criticism—that is, the *old* New Criticism associated with the names of T. S. Eliot, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks—*that* New Criticism is over, finished, defunct. What is more, this shift in critical fashion is widely perceived not merely as a routine scholarly development, but as a great liberation, the lifting of an onerous burden—as if literature professors had somehow been bearing the entire weight of *The World's Body* upon their shoulders, or as if textbooks like *Understanding Poetry* and *Sound and Sense* constituted a form of bondage or a grand imposition on the credulity of college English teachers. Never again, they seem to proclaim in the smug tone of someone conscious of having recovered righteousness, will we submit to that unhistorical formalism or subject our students to the cultural elitism of canonical works. Everywhere the atmosphere of classrooms and library bookstack carrels thickens with an almost palpable fog of sanctimony.

Now, considered objectively, this is a very strange state of affairs. The New Criticism flourished during the thirties, forties, and fifties and remained formidably influential even through the sixties when its dominance over literary study was everywhere challenged. This was the time when the study of literature in the modern vernacular languages was established once and for all in the curriculum of American universities; English and American literature, in particular, assumed a central role in undergraduate education and became a major focus of graduate training and academic scholarship. It is not too much to say that the activities of the New Critics and their followers staked out the literary field and defined the university environment in which the revisionists now operate. If the movement known as New Criticism had never occurred, it is improbable that the position and activities of literary scholars would be of much significance in the contemporary university. Whatever shortcomings may have emerged in the New Critical program, whatever defects or excesses of method or substance may have stood in need of correction, one would expect the beneficiaries of the achievements of the New Criticism to regard it with at least an affectionate tolerance. Hence the current attitude among the denizens of English and foreign language departments, which ranges from severe disapproval to scathing repudiation, is more than a little surprising.

It is still more surprising when one realizes that the condemnation of the New Criticism is founded on misconceptions, if not outright deceptions. In *The Attack on Literature* René Wellek has demonstrated conclusively that the major accusations leveled at the New Criticism are "baseless." Wellek lists four common allegations against the New Critics: (1) that they are "formalists" with no interest in the human content of literature, (2) that they ignore the historical context of literature, (3) that they reduce literature to an abstract science, and (4) that the "close reading" practiced by the New Critics is a mere pedagogical device, an American version of *explication du texte*, fit only for undergraduates in provincial colleges. These allegations "can be so convincingly refuted by an appeal to the texts," says Wellek, "that I wonder whether current commentators have ever actually read the writings of the New Critics."

My own experience tends to corroborate Wellek's suspicion: more of the "current commentators" have probably read deconstructionists like Frank Lentricchia or Jonathan Culler inveighing against the "formalism" of the New Critics than have actually read the New Critics themselves. But I also doubt whether it would make any difference if they did read

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them: the attack on the New Critics is not a mistake; that is, it is not based on a misunderstanding that could be cleared up to the satisfaction of all parties by a candid exchange of views. The New Criticism has not been vilified because of its errors and vices, which doubtless afflict it as they do all things human, but has rather been scourged for its virtues. It is not too much to say that the New Critics have been the victims of what is called in counterespionage circles a campaign of disinformation. The charge that comes up again and again in current discussions of the New Criticism is "formalism," "an opprobrious term," Wellek notes, "first used by Marxists against a group of Russian scholars in the twenties."

Now the contemporary academic scene is steeped in Marxism (albeit often unconscious), and "formalism" is the inevitable dismissive term applied to the New Criticism, meant to suggest that the New Critics were concerned about literature only as an objectified verbal configuration, devoid of human significance and cut off from the realities of history. If this were true, however, the New Criticism would be a threat to no one and would hardly provoke such hostility. The fact is that the New Criticism is condemned not because it treats the literary work as an empty form remote from history, but because it understands literary form and the relation between meaning and history in a way that undermines the Gnostic materialism characteristic of most contemporary ideologies.

At their best the New Critics stress not "mere form," but form as a structure of significance, an embodiment of human experience. By capturing human experience in words and isolating it from the flow of time—in other words, by creating aesthetic distance—the literary work of art furnishes unique and invaluable access to that experience. Thus, far from evincing a lack of interest in history, this view of literature strengthens the relation between the author and history by treating the literary work as a portal into the meaning of the ceaseless currents of the historical process. Precisely insofar as it transcends the particular biases and individual purposes of its author, as well as the immediate expectations and assumptions of its readers along with the political and socioeconomic conditions of its era, the work of literature is a testimony to the inherent significance and purpose of human life. In proposing such an understanding of literature, the New Critics are not aping either the mathematical or the empirical modes of scientific knowledge; they are, rather, urging us to recognize alternative ways of knowing that comprehend a broader spectrum of reality. Finally, although it seems quixotic in this day and age to stigmatize as being a mere pedagogical device a critical method that teaches students to read and write, it is also true that the New Criticism—at least when it has not been abused—provides far more than a mere repertoire of verbal techniques. In regarding the literary work of art as a subsistent structure of meaning—that is, in granting it, in some sense, an independent ontological status—the New Criticism establishes the study of literature as a principal means of handing on the culture of Western civilization. This is an educational undertaking of crucial importance.

Now all of this is anathema to the dominant ideologies of the contemporary university. If the language and tone of the current academic setting are broadly Marxist, it is helpful to think about the radical predilection of the modern world in general in terms of the Gnostic paradigm formulated by Eric Voegelin in *The New Science of Politics*. Gnostic dualism both despises the material creation and sees it as decisive in forming the character and conduct of human beings: the evil that men do is not attributable to the sinful will of the individual; it is rather an intrinsic and hence inevitable result of physical existence. At the same time, the Gnostics also believe that those who attain to a special knowledge, or gnosis, become part of an elite group who rise above the condition and destiny of ordinary mortals. Combine this with empirical science and technology, and the result looks very much like modern Marxism: the entirety of human reality, including the "superstructure" of culture and society, derives from the material forces and conditions of the economic "infrastructure." Yet again, there is the elite, now comprising radical intellectuals and politicians, able somehow to escape the fateful determinism of material life and, in the wake of the industrial revolution, forge a utopia in which all aspirations are realized, all desires gratified.

Obviously only a small minority of contemporary academics would expressly subscribe to an overt Marxism, and few (at least of my acquaintance) could even identify Gnosticism with any confidence; nevertheless, a set of analogous attitudes permeates a broad range of the academic community, and the influence of Marxism and associated ideologies has become especially notable on literature faculties in recent years. It is evident in a pervasive malaise in the academic world—a discontent with the limits embedded in the actual nature of human reality—and in the concomitant, if contradictory, preoccupation with the autonomy of the individual and the exaltation of his subjective longings. The literary critic in this frame of mind will be inclined to approach a story or a poem or a play less as an imaginative rendering or revelation of the structure of reality than as an open-ended vehicle for the free play of individual fantasies.

Now it is not hard to see why the New Criticism, with its insistence on the objective integrity of the literary work, would hold little appeal for the contemporary academic ideologue. At its inception the New Criticism was, among other things, a reac-

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tion against the impressionistic "appreciations" of literature by genteel dabblers, against the late Romantic worship of the author as prophet or genius, and against a school of literary history that buried individual works under a mass of trivial details about influences and fashions while altogether eschewing the serious task of critical judgment. The New Criticism was, above all, an assertion that a piece of fiction or poetry or drama could matter, could have significance in and of itself.

Such a view of the literary work entails certain metaphysical and moral premises that are incompatible with the radicalism that now dominates academic and intellectual life. First, the New Critics almost all insist that the proper end of literary study is the work itself conceived as an independent object, and that investigations of the author's biography, of the historical situation in which he wrote, of the work's "reception history" and relations to other works of literature—all of this is ancillary to the interpretation and evaluation of the work itself. These premises assume that a literary work exists independently of the interests and purposes (conscious or unconscious) of the author, or of the responses to or experience of the work on the part of any particular reader or collection of readers in any given time or place. A work of literature, then, stands as a testimony to the independence of the human spirit from material necessity: a man who can in words create a structure of significance that transcends the constraints of physical causation, or who can respond to it with sympathy and understanding, is himself in that measure a transcendent being; that is, he is a free, rational agent. By the same token, the work of literature in some ways rehabilitates that very material universe: it is seen neither as the realm of sheer darkness and despair of the ancient Gnostics nor as the meaningless grinding process of their Marxist heirs, but rather as a purposive design in which mankind is, or ought to be, temporarily at home. Literature is precisely humanity's imaginative ordering of the experience of the world.

The moral implications of the New Criticism are equally repugnant to radical ideology: if a literary work is a sign of human freedom, it is also a reminder of the limits of that freedom. As a representation of reality, a literary work is a manifestation of the structure of reality that exists independently of, and sometimes in conflict with, individual expectation and desire. As an embodiment of meaning apart from author and interpreter alike, the literary work is a reminder that human beings can discover significance, but not manufacture it. The New Criticism thus responds affirmatively to what we might call the moral realism of great literature. Consider, for example, how many tragedies manifest the dignity and grandeur of human beings as morally free agents who yet can degrade and destroy themselves through the proud abuse of freedom and the refusal to respect the limitations inherent in the nature of reality. Similarly, the interpreter of the drama is free to explore the richness of the play and draw out as much as he can of its inexhaustible significance, but he must respect the integrity of the text and acknowledge its meaning as its own and not his.

Now virtually every effort to discredit the New Criticism also involves an attack upon the objective integrity of the literary work of art, along with a concomitant exaltation of the reader or interpreter. As Elaine Pagels says of the Gnostics' relation to Christ's message (in her work *The Gnostic Gospels*), what they sought—and seek—is not a true interpretation of the message, but a unique, wholly subjective self-realization. The authority of canonical scripture and apostolic tradition are set aside in favor of the individual's interior divinity. Gnosticism provides so useful a model because the ancient Gnostic, like the modern Marxist, is preoccupied with escaping or transforming an unsatisfactory reality in the interests of personal domination or self-satisfaction. Because of its fictionality, literature can be regarded as a useful vehicle for this, but only if it is severed from reality by the denial of its status as a representation and rendered entirely responsive to the will of the interpreter.

The various debates between the New Critics and traditional literary historians and between the New Critics and the Chicago Aristotelians, back in the forties and fifties, tended to be either personal or technical—matters of tone and temperament or emphasis and degree. In principle, they were nearly all resolvable. Beginning late in the 1950s, however, with the "archetypal" criticism of Northrop Frye, the various attacks upon the New Criticism began to arise from a fundamentally incompatible understanding of the nature and purpose of literature. Frye would reduce all works of literature to a collection of variations on a few basic myths, universal in a vaguely Jungian sense, and he deprecates value judgments and hierarchical discriminations deriving from aesthetic considerations. After all, if what is distinctive about a work of literature is its embodiment of an archetypal myth, its unique features as a specific work will hardly be prized. From Frye's quasi-religious perspective, literature constitutes a "secular scripture," with its authority drawn not from its own inherent revelatory features, but rather conferred by the interpreter, for whom each work serves as a vehicle for his own mythic fantasies and wish-fulfillments.

This is even more the case with one of Frye's most notable successors, Harold Bloom, who began as a champion of the revolutionary Romantics, especially Blake and Shelley, in the face of their depreciation by Eliot and the New Critics. Bloom's animus against the New Criticism is expressly political and

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religious, and in recent years—in *Agon*, for example—he has identified himself as a "Jewish Gnostic." He adapts Freudian concepts to the service of a visionary radicalism in which the writing and reading of poetry are a displaced version of Oedipal repression. The literary work becomes a contested site in which the egos of the author, his literary predecessors, and his readers struggle for psychic dominance.

Other critics who have come under the spell of psychoanalysis, most notably Norman Holland and David Bleich, have simply denied any substance at all to the literary work, except as it exists in the mind of the reader. This theory would seem to be a dream come true for the duller sort of undergraduate who repeatedly demands recognition in aggrieved tones for "what the story means to me." Stanley Fish, who began his career as a proponent of the reader-response school under the rubric "affective stylistics," soon realized that such an approach does nothing to enhance the prestige of the scholarly community, since it provides no basis for preferring the reading of a full professor to that of the most callow freshman. Fish has spent the last decade developing the concept of the "interpretive community": according to which the very existence of a work of literature lies in the meaning conferred upon it by the members of a group defined by their common adherence to a set of criteria for reading and judging and arguing. In practice it means that a work of literature is the creature of recognized, published scholars in academic institutions. The independent existence of the work of literature fares no better in the psychoanalytic criticism influenced by the French neo-Freudian, Jacques Lacan. Lacan's disciples in the field of literary criticism are mainly academic feminists and their allies, bent upon discomfiting what they call "patriarchy" wherever it rears its ugly head. Since the vast majority of writers in the canon of Western literature have been men, and since they have most often been so foolish as to write with an object called a *pen* of a most suspicious shape, there is little surprise in the discovery that most literature is "phallocentric." In this mode of criticism, the ontological status of the literary work would seem to be largely determined by the gonads of author and reader.

Two of the principal continental developments of the sixties similarly diminished the independent existence of the literary work. The so-called "Geneva School," exemplified most notably by Georges Poulet, is generally uninterested in the particular poem, play, or novel, which is exploited, along with diaries, letters, and obiter dicta, to reconstruct and empathize, or even identify, with the total consciousness of the author. Parisian structuralism, with its close attention to details of language and form, bears a superficial methodological similarity to the New Critical approach; however, it differs sharply in its pretense to a scientific, almost mathematical rigor, and in its treatment of literature as a system, which is in turn only part of a larger system of cultural signs. Hence the study of literature is part of linguistics, linguistics part of semiotics. Although the methods of Geneva and Paris are opposed insofar as the one seems obsessed with authorial intentionality while the other utterly discounts it, they are alike in dismissing or denying the objective existence of the literary work itself.

Both of these schools have in turn been furiously assailed by the "postmodernist" theorists who have come to dominate academic literary study during the past two decades. And these latter have, if that were possible, only further diminished the status of the literary work. Deconstruction, the brainchild of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, asserts the failure of intentional presence both in the author's consciousness and in the text. Like every other human utterance, a work of literature has neither substantial existence nor distinctive identity. In the New Historicism, of course, Marxist principles of materialist determinism become explicit: new historicist critics view a work of literature as in essence no different from any other document or text; all are products of the sociopolitical conditions attendant upon their composition.

When the various attacks upon the New Criticism in the course of the last three decades are thus considered, it is evident that they are all essentially attacks upon the ontological integrity of the literary work as such. Deconstruction and the New Historicism take the next step, making explicit that which is common to all of these theoretical perspectives, i.e., a denial of the concept of imaginative literature as a distinct category of writing. The New Criticism is the ideological enemy because imaginative literature itself—poetry, fiction, drama—is the ideological enemy. René Wellek, an eminent defender of the significance of the written text, quotes Roland Barthes, a fashionable deconstructor, asserting that "literature is constitutionally reactionary" and then, somewhat incredulously, proceeds to show that Barthes is mistaken, that literature and literary figures have in fact often been in the vanguard of social protest and revolution. One is reminded of E. D. Hirsch's frustrated astonishment in *Cultural Literacy* at radical demands for the dismantling of the teaching of traditional humanist disciplines. Surely everyone must recognize, Hirsch argues, that it is only by mastering the verbal skills and traditional knowledge required by cultivated literacy that one will be able to effect social change and do away with injustice.

The exasperation of Wellek and Hirsch and many others is understandable, but in large measure it assumes that today's academic radicals are interested in reforming Western society and its cultural institutions when, in fact, they are mainly interested in obliterating them. Wellek himself points out that a

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leveling nihilism is at the heart of the matter: "All these objections to the concept of literature," he says, "have one trait in common: they do not recognize quality as a criterion of literature; quality that may be either aesthetic or intellectual, but which in either case sets off a specific realm of verbal expression from daily transactions in language." Given the radical perspective of the ideologues who currently dominate the literature departments of universities, literature *is* a conservative force because it implies a standard of discrimination and judgment.

The old New Critics regarded the study of genuine works of imaginative literature as a powerful civilizing force because it is educative in the strict sense: it is a means of leading the student *out* of the narrow, self-interested realm of individual and peer group; it is a confrontation with landmarks of cultural tradition whose significance and authority persist from generation to generation and provide norms of thought, feeling, and behavior. In the New Critical scheme the work of critics and scholars is ancillary to the masterpieces that constitute this literary culture. Its task is to define and identify literary excellence and through interpretation to point out how literature represents and reveals the nature of reality.

Naturally, then, it is precisely for its insistence upon literary quality that the New Criticism is currently hated and feared. As Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier, editors of a recent collection of essays on *The Historical Renaissance*, aver, "New Criticism distinguished and privileged 'literary' language; the characteristic richness and ambiguity with which literature was associated was seen to render it a far fitter object of study than other types of texts, such as descriptions of cities or political tracts." Now, they continue, we know better: "Today scholars of the English Renaissance are intensely concerned with the connections between literary texts and social and historical phenomena—and, indeed, with collapsing the boundaries suggested by those very distinctions." In other words, the distinction between works of literature and what used to be called historical documents is wiped away; whatever is written is a "text," and all texts are equal. The same strictures apply to discriminations among different levels of fiction: no distinction is allowed between serious literature of aesthetic merit, or at least aspiration to such merit, and what once would have been called subliterature, pulp fiction, or *kitsch*. "Scholarship" dealing with "popular" literature is an academic growth industry. For an academic, perhaps the best evidence of the power of this new industry is the number of his colleagues who seem to spend more time listening to hard rock and watching music videos than reading poetry.

There are two main consequences of all this: the reduction of literature to so much grist for the ideological mill and the concomitant total empowerment of the interpreter. In *Criticism and Social Change* Frank Lentricchia maintains that the effort to interpret a text objectively is merely a form of collaboration with the political status quo, since "Literature is inherently nothing; or it is a body of rhetorical stategies waiting to be seized." His Duke colleague Stanley Fish argues that when the interpreter approaches a literary text not with the aim of *demonstrating* its meaning and value, but rather of *persuading* his audience to accept it on his terms, then the interpreter supersedes the text:

> But perhaps the greatest gain that falls to us under a persuasion model is a greatly enhanced sense of the importance of our activities. (In certain quarters, of course, where the critical ideal is one of self-effacement, this will be perceived to be the greatest danger.) No longer is the critic the humble servant of texts whose glories exist independently of anything he might do; it is what he does, within the constraints embedded in the literary institution, that brings texts into being and makes them available for analysis and appreciation. The practice of literary criticism is not something one must apologize for; it is absolutely essential not only to the maintenance of, but to the very production of, the objects of its attention.

In the formulations both of Lentricchia and Fish, the critic does not seek to elucidate the vision of reality represented by a work of literature, but instead sets out to bend a "text"—so much plastic verbiage—to his own version of things, and to manipulate an audience in the process. Of course as Fish's language reveals, this interpretive license only operates "within the constraints embedded in the literary institution," or, as he has taken to calling it, the "interpretive community." It turns out that maximum freedom is maximum bondage, the critic being as much a product of his socioeconomic situation as a book.

This state of affairs was anticipated by Cleanth Brooks some four decades ago. In the preface to *The Well Wrought Urn*, perhaps the single most important work of New Criticism, he observed, "The temper of our times is strongly relativistic," and in the face of this, he affirms the propriety, indeed the necessity, of seeing "what residuum, if any, is left after we have referred the poem to its cultural matrix." Brooks explicitly affirms the importance of literary history, and anyone familiar with his own critical practice will be aware of his profound knowledge of the historical context of the literary works he treats. "Yet," he continues, "if poetry exists as poetry in any meaningful sense, the attempt must be made [to view it *sub specie aeternitatis*]. Otherwise the poetry of the past becomes significant merely as

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cultural anthropology, and the poetry of the present, merely as a political, or religious, or moral instrument." The state of affairs about which Brooks offered this caution forty-odd years ago is now cheerfully flaunted as the New Historicism.

The first chapter of *The Well Wrought Urn*, titled "The Language of Paradox," provides perhaps the most vivid clue to both the implications of the New Criticism and of ideological theories that have arisen to challenge it. It is this chapter, for instance, that has been singled out for "deconstruction" by Jonathan Culler. In it Brooks sets out to show that the language of poetry is inherently paradoxical—a blend of "irony and wonder"; that is, what distinguishes a genuine poem is that its verbal pattern, especially its various figures of speech, cannot be reduced to any set of plain prose statements—or at least that any such paraphrase is not the same as, or interchangeable with, the poem. In the language of economics, poetry is not fungible. Precisely this irreducibility is what constitutes a poem's independent existence.

The poem that Brooks cites to illustrate this view is "The Canonization" by John Donne, a brilliant, if extravagant and sometimes risqué, deployment of religious language in defense of human sexual love. The poem is by turns outrageously and defiantly witty, tender, and impassioned. What is more, there are numerous features of the poem that seem to reflect Donne's own life—he destroyed his hopes for preferment at Court and fell into disgrace and financial ruin by eloping with a very young woman staying in his employer's household. The poem, however, was not published until after the poet's death, and its actual relation to events in his life is finally a matter of speculation. Brooks' central thesis is that the seemingly contradictory tensions in "The Canonization"—the ironic, even bawdy, references to sexual intercourse jostling against the assertions of human love's transcendence—finally converge in a unified vision of our experience of love which cannot be expressed in our ordinary, commonsense statements about it. The vision that is verbally manifest in the poem may or may not have been inspired or provoked by this or that incident or preoccupation in the life of the man John Donne, but the poem itself is distinct from the aims and experiences of the poet, and accessible to the experience of readers in a way that the actual life experience of another is not.

Consider, for example, the central stanza of "The Canonization":

Call us what you will, wee'are made such by love;
Call her one, mee another flye,
We'are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
And wee in us finde the'Eagle and the dove.
The Phoenix ridle hath more wit
By us, we two being one, are it.
So, to one neutrall thing both sexes fit.
Wee dye and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.

There are more puzzles and obscurities and complex tonal layers than I can begin to unravel here (that, after all, is the point), but I do wish to call attention to the closing couplet. Christ's Resurrection from death, one of the mysteries of the Christian faith, is evoked here at the same time *and in the same words* as a bawdy Renaissance pun on "dying" as the attainment of sexual climax. One could choose to regard this as mere blasphemy, but the tone of the poem as a whole seems to preclude such a simplification; yet the lines do gain much of their force from the *suggestion* of blasphemy. This passage, and finally the poem as a whole, sets out to acknowledge, and so far as possible embrace, our entire equivocal experience of human sexuality, which is funny, embarrassing, obscene, "dirty"; exciting and pleasurable and yet repugnant; tender, exalted, sacred. Marriage is, after all, regarded by some Christian communions as a sacrament and by all as a holy and honorable estate, and it is only consummated by sexual intercourse. Brooks' comment on the passage is instructive: "The lovers after the act are the same. Their love is not exhausted in mere lust. This is their title to canonization. Their love is like the phoenix. . . . Most important of all, the sexual submeaning of 'die' does not contradict the other meanings."

It is not my purpose here to defend every aspect of Brooks' reading of "The Canonization" (I myself find the poem less solemn and more boisterous than he); what is at stake, however, is his view of this poem—or any effective poem—as a triumph over the inadequacies of our ordinary language. The heart of the New Critical account of poetry, of literature generally, is the discovery of how the work of imaginative writers pushes back the limitations of human language, yet at the same time, in the very act of challenging them, reminds us of the ineluctable presence of such limitations by the extraordinary literary devices required for the confrontation.

The enemies Brooks and his generation were accustomed to were likely to attack from the direction of positivism or a quasi-scientific rationalism: literature was dismissed as merely "emotive," inaccurate, not "empirically verifiable." Hence the New Critics were at pains to stress that the language of imaginative literature and of proper literary criticism was, in its own way, as precise as the language of science, that if the knowledge embodied in literature lacked the mathematical certitude of physics, it was nevertheless objective. From the deconstructivist perspective, however, no discourse can boast precision or objectivity; no signifier can make the signified fully present or available to the mind. Everything, then, is "literature," but this is not an honorif-

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ic term. Scientific and philosophic discourse, legal documents, and pastoral elegies are all chains of signifiers that never terminate in the signified: textuality is our prison from which there is no escape.

The typical procedure of deconstruction is to grasp a loose thread in the textual weave of a discourse and to proceed with the unraveling. Jonathan Culler seizes upon Brooks' comment on the fourth stanza of "The Canonization," where the "sonnets" and "hymnes" celebrating the passion of the lovers are compared to a "well wrought urne." "The poem is an instance of the doctrine which it asserts," Brooks says; "it is both the assertion and the realization of the assertion. The poet has actually before our eyes built within the song the 'pretty room' with which he says the lovers can be content. The poem itself is the well-wrought urn which can hold the lovers' ashes and which will not suffer in comparison with the prince's 'halfe-acre tombe.'" According to Culler, in *On Deconstruction*, Brooks is attributing to the poem a "self-reference"—a "self-reflexivity . . . seen as self-knowledge, self-possession, a self-understanding or presence of the poem to itself." But, he assures us, "Under exegetical pressure, self-reference demonstrates the impossibility of self-possession." Culler proceeds to insist that "The Canonization" is "not so much a self-contained urn as a chain of discourses and representations"; for "if the poem is the urn, then one of the principal features of the urn is that it portrays people responding to the urn." It turns out that Cleanth Brooks himself becomes part of the poem "he thought he was analyzing from the outside":

> This self-referential element in Donne's poem does not produce or induce a closure in which the poem harmoniously is the thing it describes. In celebrating itself as urn the poem incorporates a celebration of the urn and thus becomes something other than the urn; and if the urn is taken to include the response to the urn, then the responses it anticipates, such as Brooks', become a part of it and prevent it from closing. Self-reference does not close it in upon itself but leads to a proliferation of representations, a series of invocations and urns, including Brooks' *The Well Wrought Urn*.

There are two important points to notice here. First, "self-referentiality" is not Brooks' term, nor his concept; Culler imposes it with no justification. For a poem to be "both the assertion and the realization of the assertion" does not entail "self-reference" or "self-reflexivity." "The Canonization" refers not to itself, but to what it represents: the speech of a fictive character, whose attitudes and ideas doubtless had their origin in the consciousness of John Donne, but who is certainly not identical with that poet. (The "speaker" or "persona" is as "present" as he ever was; Donne is long since dead.) Second, when Brooks says, "The poem itself is the well wrought urn," this is a statement of a different order than, say, "The poem comprises forty-five lines." Brooks uses "well wrought urn" metaphorically, much as Donne does; and so the urn was "something other than an urn" long before Culler noticed. He might as well require Brooks to produce an enameled clay vessel decorated with "Countries, Townes, Courts"; or Keats to account for the deserted village on his "Grecian Urn." The deconstructionists are quite the cleverest people around the English department these days, but occasionally they resemble the dullest undergraduates in their inability to distinguish between figurative and literal language—or between poetry and pottery.

To be sure, a major goal of the deconstructive project is to put in question such binary oppositions as literal/figurative and literary/scientific; but as the example of Jonathan Culler suggests, we usually get question-begging rather than argument. His deconstruction of Brooks' reading of "The Canonization" begins by *assuming* that the notion of self-referentiality applies to a poem in the same fashion as it applies to, say, a legal document that defines itself. Likewise, he assumes that the nature of signification renders nugatory any real distinction between fact and fiction, between literal statement and metaphor. Of course these are the very points that the deconstructionist is supposed to prove. But in fact deconstruction can, finally, prove nothing, for by denying the efficacy of discourse it undermines the significance of proof. Deconstruction is typical of contemporary literary theory in hating the word as an embodiment or manifestation of truth. Hence it attacks the integrity of the fictive world of imaginative literature precisely because literature defines itself in terms of the truth which it is not, but which it represents.

A poem cannot exhaust reality, but it can arrest it: by manifesting a vision of experience available in no other way. This is only possible because, like a physical urn, it is a distinct substantial object: only by its difference from human experience can a poem represent that experience, even as the urn can be a metaphor for a poem only if it is not itself a poem. The alternative to "crystalline closure" is not, then, an endless and chaotic "repetition and proliferation," but a structured relationship of significance.

Literature helps us to know life precisely in the way that the postmodernists deny: literature dramatizes experience by establishing a vantage point *outside* it. It is just because "The Canonization" occupies a different existential space from John Donne, Cleanth Brooks, and flesh-and-blood love affairs that we are able to learn so much from it about Donne, Brooks, and love—and ourselves. FT

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Books In Review

Schooling for Virtue

WHY JOHNNY CAN'T TELL RIGHT FROM WRONG: MORAL ILLITERACY AND THE CASE FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION. By WILLIAM KILPATRICK. *Simon & Schuster. 336 pp. $23.*

RECLAIMING OUR SCHOOLS: A HANDBOOK ON TEACHING CHARACTER, ACADEMICS, AND DISCIPLINE. By EDWARD A. WYNNE and KEVIN RYAN. FOREWORD by JAMES S. COLEMAN. *Macmillan. 234 pp. $20.*

***Reviewed by* Charles L. Glenn *and* Joshua Glenn**

"MORALIZING" MAY be the nearest thing to a dirty word in current public discourse, and nowhere is this more true than in discussions of the content of schooling. Undergraduate students at one of the most selective schools of education were recently asked the following questions:

> Suppose you are asked to teach a 7th grade course or unit in moral education. *Question 1:* If you had to choose between one of the two models below, which would you choose? *Question 2:* Would you agree to teach the course if B were the only option given?
>
> A. The first approach encourages students to develop their own values and value systems. This approach relies on presenting the students with provocative ethical dilemmas and encouraging open discussion and exchange of opinion. The ground rule for discussion is that there are no right or wrong answers. Each student must decide for himself/herself what is right or wrong. Students are encouraged to be nonjudgmental about values that differ from their own.
>
> B. The second approach involves a conscious effort to teach specific virtues and character traits such as courage, justice, self-control, honesty, responsibility, practicing charity, obeying lawful authority, etc. These concepts are introduced and explained and then illustrated by memorable examples from history, literature, and current events. The teacher expresses a strong belief in the importance of these virtues and encourages his/her students to practice them in their own lives.

It will not come as a surprise to any reader with recent experience in American schools that 88 percent of these future teachers selected the first approach, and only 9 percent, the second. Nearly half of the ninety-four students participating said that they would *refuse* to use the method that involved teaching virtues and positive character traits.

How have we come to this pass? Is it simply that our society has become pervasively uncomfortable with any suggestion that one choice might be better than another, with, that is, any hint of moral judgment? Certainly this is part of it. There is something more, however, a dimension of the evolution of American public education itself that favors the promotion of tolerance above all else.

In discussions of the values content of instruction, it is a common experience to be told that our society "simply won't survive unless we promote tolerance." And since no one wants to be accused of "intolerance," such assertions are rarely challenged. But what does "tolerance" mean? It comes from the Latin word meaning "to bear a burden"; the tolerance of a bridge is the amount of weight that bridge can bear before it breaks. When we toler-

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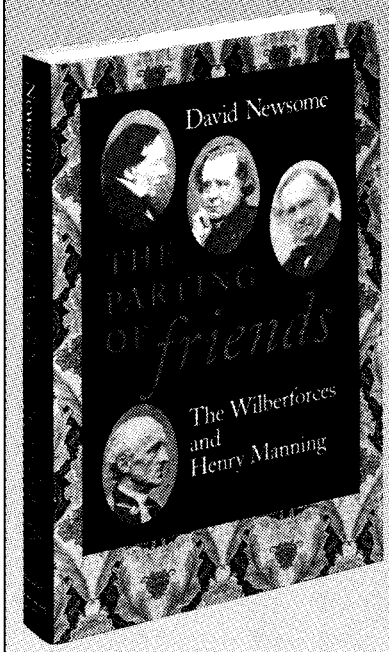

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ate someone's beliefs or actions, we are putting up with something with which we do not agree, or that we even find offensive or repugnant. Riding on the subway, for example, we may, in order to avoid confrontation, try to ignore—to tolerate—offensive behavior by our fellow passengers, but we do not thereby persuade ourselves that such behavior is acceptable.

This is not the meaning of tolerance for many educators today. The mission of the school, they believe, is to encourage students to be nonjudgmental about values that differ from their own, and to insist that there are no right and wrong answers. Tolerance itself becomes the only positive virtue, and intolerance the only vice. In effect, these educators deny the seriousness of real conflicts and trivialize the process of taking a stand for what is right.

THE AUTHORS OF the two books under review have a very different perspective. Both reject instructional strategies like "Values Clarification" and related drug education and sex education programs that invite children to invent their own moral criteria, as well as programs that seek to promote moral reasoning through discussion of hard cases unlikely ever to arise. For Kilpatrick, and for Wynne and Ryan, the primary mission of the school is to initiate youth into the moral heritage of our society and to develop the habits of virtuous action.

A school, if it is any good, is a little society with its own moral order, and that moral order is at least as important in carrying out the school's educational mission as is its formal instruction. A school whose moral order is that of the subway—pretending not to recognize disagreements—cannot educate properly. Is the only alternative, then, to celebrate the disagreements while insisting that they are of no moral consequence? These two books insist that it is not.

In *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong*, William Kilpatrick discusses more clearly and persuasively than anyone has yet done why both the content and strategies of current instruction are not only inadequate but often downright harmful. He writes:

> Americans have been led to believe that their children will be able to fight their personal moral struggles with weapons that, upon examination, turn out to be very flimsy; there is not much evidence that values curriculums or the "self-esteem" they claim to foster have much effect on behavior. It is perhaps for this reason that values educators have shifted the focus of moral education away from personal behavior toward public policy issues. What seems to matter for them is not whether one is a good son or daughter, brother or sister, but whether one has formulated a position on nuclear weapons, the environment, or surrogate motherhood.

Kilpatrick shows in detail why most of what is done in the name of drug education and sex education does not serve to develop the habits that sustain virtuous or even sensible living, and urges that we "reestablish schools as places of serious moral purpose," something not achieved by abstract exhortation. He quotes Bruno Bettelheim: "The question for a child is not 'Do I want to be good?' but 'Whom do I want to be like?'" The naive notion that moral decisions are made in a void, as though the child could reinvent the rules that countless generations have learned through experience, is the basis for too many educational practices. As Stanley Hauerwas and David Burrell have pointed out, one cannot speak of morality-as-decision-making while ignoring the fact that decisions are always made in the context of one's "narrative." Morality removed from narrative, from a sense of the shape and direction of one's individual life and one's community, is meaningless.

Kilpatrick urges that moral education be promoted through the use of stories that provide a sense of what used to be called "the attractiveness of goodness." He compares the use of a "lifeboat exercise" used in Values Clarification classes, in which the pupils are to decide which of the passengers in an overloaded lifeboat should be thrown overboard—"a young couple and their child, an elderly brother and sister, a doctor, a bookkeeper, an athlete, an entertainer, and so on"—with the film *A Night to Remember*, based upon the Titanic disaster. The film

> marshals its audience swiftly and powerfully to the side of certain values. We feel admiration for the radio operators who stay at their post. We feel pity and contempt for the handful of male passengers who sneak into lifeboats. There are not an infinite number of ways to respond to these scenes. . . . Drama is not the right medium for creating a value-neutral climate. It exerts too much moral force.

Thus he proposes that parents read stories to their children from books that promote moral heroism—an extensive annotated list of which Kilpatrick includes as an appendix.

THE EMPHASIS of Wynne and Ryan's book, *Reclaiming Our Schools*, is on what schools can do to become communities within which the habits of virtue are learned. On their first page they reject the idea that what is needed is simply an improved curriculum: "We believe moral schools will comfortably devise ways of handling immediate, topical moral issues. Conversely, schools without sound moral norms may well misapply the most wholesome problem-oriented instruction."

They stress the importance of everything that happens in a school, since a "school or classroom devoid of virtuous acts is not transmitting traditional values, regardless of the refined thoughts that may be passing through pupils' minds," and they call for school assemblies, cere-

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monies, and prizes of various types, as well as ample opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the life of the school.

Wynne and Ryan agree with Kilpatrick's disparagement of attempts to teach moral reasoning before children have internalized the principles from which reasoning should proceed, arguing that "the first moral need of the young is to learn to avoid ratiocination. Instead, they must accept the centrality of doing the hard thing without thinking about it." Similarly, the teacher must see moral challenge in the daily details of schoolwork. "Being a moral model is not waiting for the Great Dilemma to come along. . . . It is giving one's diligent attention to teaching and to the small demands of our professional life. . . ."

Why should schools seek to develop virtue? After all, many seem to do a poor enough job simply teaching basic skills and a little history and geography. Wynne and Ryan argue that moral education is central to the socializing mission of schools. "All societies want people to be formally competent, to possess appropriate skills. But the greatest opprobrium is directed at *morally* incompetent people. It is bad to be stupid, but worse to be evil."

It also seems likely that schools will not do a very good job of making young people smart unless they also devote careful attention to making them good. "The undisciplined student and the undisciplined classroom," Wynne and Ryan write, "are resistant to acquiring knowledge and intellectual skills." The school that is academically successful is likely to be marked by purposeful attention to the crafts of teaching and learning, of reading, writing, and disciplined inquiry. These qualities, as Aristotle pointed out, are themselves virtues.

But it is not enough to know what should be at the heart of the curriculum, or even how schools should be organized to develop the habits of civic and personal virtue, if those schools must function in an environment that constantly works against their efforts. There is reason to believe that our educational system makes it very difficult for schools to have the qualities that would make them effective.

A small example: Kilpatrick notes that when the federal Adolescent Family Life Act of 1981 provided federal funds for the development of sex education curricula based upon the encouragement of abstinence, the American Civil Liberties Union filed suit on the grounds that this constituted an establishment of religion. This argument was rejected by the Supreme Court, which found that teaching teenagers the value of chastity was a "reasonable secular goal." According to a recent (March 24, 1993) article in *Education Week*, however, it appears likely that funding for abstinence-oriented sex education, currently $7.5 million con-

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trasted with $173 million for contraception-oriented programs, will be eliminated by Congress. The responsible official in the new Administration was quoted as saying that "just because one particular group supports abstinence doesn't mean that should be our only focus."

It might seem to follow that different schools should be encouraged and supported in using different approaches, reflecting the agreement of the parents and teachers directly concerned, and that parents should be allowed to select publicly funded schools corresponding to their own views about what is in the best interests of their children. This is unfortunately not the prevailing view among those who make policy for education about what is desirable and consistent with the demands of a democratic system for a pluralistic society. Instead they stubbornly insist that schools should regard the concerns of parents as attempts at "censorship," while providing little support for the development of sharply profiled schools where teachers can teach and give leadership with confidence that parents in fact will support them.

Wynne and Ryan take us step by step, with admirable clarity, through what is necessary to create good schools, but it will require a fundamental change in the policy climate dominating American public education before such schools become the norm rather than the rare exception.

Life's Value

THE CHILDREN OF MEN. By P. D. JAMES. *Knopf. 241 pp. $22.*

***Reviewed by* Alan Jacobs**

FOR SOME YEARS now the novels of P. D. James—most of which feature Adam Dalgleish, London homicide detective and published poet—have been growing increasingly ambitious. In the early Dalgleish stories, as in most mysteries, the detective occupies center stage; readers follow the progress of the case, while contemplating Dalgleish's distinctive mental world. All of James' novels are notably literate and intelligent, several cuts above the standard in detective fiction, though none of the early ones transgresses the usual boundaries of the genre. But lately her books have expanded their horizons; this is especially true of *Devices and Desires* (1990), the most recent Dalgleish story. Here the detective's search for a murderer (or in this case murderers) still drives the plot, but several other characters are given substantial attention and are portrayed in real depth; Dalgleish becomes but one figure in a complex mosaic of contemporary English society. Indeed, *Devices and Desires* seems closer in spirit, though perhaps not in quality, to the great social novels of the nineteenth century (by George Eliot or Anthony Trollope, for instance) than to the typical modern mystery novel. The increasing, if always subtle, attention to spiritual concerns in James' recent books—she is a professing Christian—only adds to the impression that she is after bigger game than is normally found in the fields of popular fiction.

In light of this trend in her writing, James' new novel, *The Children of Men*, may not be as much of a departure as a first glance suggests. There is no Dalgleish here, no search for a murderer, and in the everyday sense of the word no mystery—though the story is quite suspenseful and could plausibly be called a thriller. Moreover, the setting, as we will see, is quite unlike anything else James has done. Yet in another sense the book follows her recent course: the social and (to a lesser degree) spiritual explorations of *Devices and Desires* are simply more pronounced here. Of all James' novels, *The Children of Men* is probably the most pointed in its social criticism, certainly the deepest in its theological reflection.

Precisely because James has now raised the fictional stakes, *The Children of Men* is also, sad to say, too short: at little more than half the length of *Devices and Desires*, it cannot do full justice to the vital and fascinating issues it raises. Some themes seem underdeveloped, the motives of some characters unclear. Another hundred pages could have made this good book an outstanding one; but there is much to be thankful for in what's here.

THE SETTING of *The Children of Men* will be the biggest surprise for P. D. James readers. Though the place is England, as usual, the time is the year 2021. And in that year England is a very different country, and the world a very different world, than we might reasonably expect. In James' imagined future, the last human child was born in October 1995; a mysterious global illness has made every man in the world sterile. New uses have been found for school buildings, playground equipment has been dismantled, the grounds themselves turned into gardens. Thus the book's title is heavily ironic: in this world there are many men, but no children.

But the title is more complex and significant than that. It would be unwarranted to call this novel an apology for Christianity, and yet the title encourages us to think along such lines. Its origin is the ninetieth Psalm—in this case, the version that appears in the burial rite of the old (1662) Anglican Book of Common Prayer, a rite that is not just quoted but that actually figures in the novel: "Lord, thou hast been our refuge: from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made: thou art God from everlasting, and world without end. Thou turnest man to destruction: again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday: seeing that is past as a watch in the night."

This might sound positively evangelistic; after all, in the context of the burial rite, it is a call to sinners to repent while they still may. But in the novel the character who pronounces these words believes neither

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in them nor in God. He is the narrator of much of the book and the protagonist of the whole, Theo Faron, an Oxford don (Merton College, Victorian history) and a skeptic—or rather, a man too tired and hopeless and beaten down by life to believe in anything. (In this he resembles almost everyone else in his world.) It is one of James' deftest touches to make her main character an unbeliever; indeed, only two characters in the book are Christians, and only one of them, a woman named Julian, a major figure. (Yes, we are invited to think of Julian of Norwich.) Thus Julian's faith and Theo's lack of it have equal claims upon our attention, and James leaves us free to assess the validity and persuasiveness of each. Nevertheless, the words of the Psalm have a force all their own, independent of the character who utters them, a fact of which Theo himself is well aware.

WHY, ONE MIGHT ASK, is the old Anglican prayer book in use in England in 2021, when it has been largely abandoned in the Church of England in 1993? This question leads us to one of James' most intriguing and subtly developed themes: the uselessness of liberal theology in a time of profound crisis. Christian theological liberalism has typically discarded orthodox eschatology in favor of a mild and essentially secular meliorism. But when people are faced with the apparent extinction of the human species, the belief in moral and material progress that undergirds such meliorism becomes, to say the least, untenable. James' story convincingly demonstrates that in such a world people will hold to a fully supernatural faith—in which hope is quite specifically a *theological* virtue—or they will abandon hope altogether. Extreme situations call forth extreme responses; comfortable middle-of-the-road liberalism has no claim on anyone's attention in such a world. What remains in that case is either to hear the call of God when "again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men," or to seek whatever passing pleasures a broken and truncated world offers.

In James' imagined future, the truly hopeless turn to the government for the provision of those pleasures. England is ruled by a man named Xan Lyppiat (Theo Faron's cousin), who styles himself the Warden; his job, as he understands it, is chiefly to protect his doomed subjects from boredom, discomfort, and disorder. The people of England, it seems, are ready to give the Warden absolute power in return for such benefits. Though the machinery of democracy remains more or less in place, virtually no one cares to exercise his or her voting rights. Democracy too dies in the absence of hope for the future.

Does the Warden's apparently benevolent despotism give people even a modicum of genuine com-

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fort? Not if they are anything like Theo Faron, who writes in his journal that "without the hope of posterity, for our race if not for ourselves, without the assurance that we being dead yet live, all pleasures of the mind and senses sometimes seem to me no more than pathetic and crumbling defences shored up against our ruins." But Faron is more honest and self-reflective than the majority, who prefer not to think hard thoughts or confront troubling facts.

James' portrayal of the many degrees of hope and hopelessness is fascinating, if insufficiently developed, and essential to the book's success. Above all else, however, *The Children of Men* is a powerful and passionate reminder of the incalculable value of human life. In our world, in which the lives of unborn children are regularly and often thoughtlessly discarded, we can scarcely imagine what might restore a proper understanding of (as the cliché quite accurately has it) "the miracle of birth." But James has: in the future she presents to us, any birth would quite literally be a miracle, and the full (if ineffectual) attention of the world is devoted to producing it. Moreover, this universal infertility generates widespread neuroses: hysterical pregnancies abound; women buy expensive clothes for dolls that they wheel about in strollers; families and friends drink champagne to celebrate new litters of puppies or kittens. When new life becomes impossible, the world comes fully to realize its value.

YET NOT QUITE the whole world. What we might call, following Dostoyevsky, the Dream of the Grand Inquisitor—that characteristically modern delusion that an elite group of social engineers can construct a utopia for the masses—is so compelling that even in such an overwhelming crisis the Warden and his small Council systematically discourage the "imperfect" from attempting to conceive. The mildly epileptic, the mentally below-average, even those with minor deformities of the limbs, all are exempted from the government's required sperm counts and its various incitements to procreation. As the story of the human race seems to approach its final chapter, the Warden of England stubbornly follows the perverse logic of eugenics and euthanasia: better the elimination of humanity altogether than the creation or perpetuation of beings who fail to meet the engineers' criteria of "quality of life."

In this account of the key themes of *The Children of Men*, I have deliberately avoided saying much about the plot; the book is, again, something of a thriller, and it would be unfair to reveal its surprises. Suffice it to say that its array of dramatic events—conspiracies against the government, terrorism, suicides, murders, an enormous manhunt, various exhibitions of heroic resourcefulness, and so on—will keep the reader's interest. P. D. James has written an intriguing and often compelling novel, which unfortunately leaves the reader wanting more. But if we keep in mind Samuel Johnson's famous comment on *Paradise Lost*, which he thought one of the greatest of all poems—"No one ever wished it longer"—any complaint about the book's brevity could quite properly be seen as a compliment.

Illusory Compromise

BEYOND THE CULTURE WARS: HOW TEACHING THE CONFLICTS CAN REVITALIZE AMERICAN EDUCATION. By GERALD GRAFF. *Norton. 214 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by
Sarah Baumgartner Thurow

ALTHOUGH HE does not mention James Davison Hunter's book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, Gerald Graff might be taking up the challenge of Hunter's final chapter. Hunter calls for the revival of certain "civic practices" once taken for granted as prerequisites for American democracy, practices that make possible public discussion of the most divisive issues because they constitute agreement *on how to conduct the conflict*. Graff looks at the conflict within the academy and proposes a similar approach: agree to do your disagreeing civilly and in front of your students so that they can learn what it is all about.

The academy is a crucial arena for the culture wars, not least because, as Graff says, it is a microcosm of society. More important, the academy has the responsibility of defining the conflict and passing judgment on the conflicting parties because it is the institution entrusted with "culturing" the next generation. One of Hunter's requirements for fruitful cultural conflict is that there be the possibility of carrying on a sustained conversation; the academy is one of the few places where that can be done. Furthermore, as Graff points out, we ask two contradictory things of academicians, that, on the one hand, they be the preservers of culture, and that, on the other hand, they be innovators. Conceivably it is this very contradiction that has given rise to, and is nowadays fueling, what we call the culture wars. All the more reason, then, to bring academic conflicts into the open.

Graff proposes to do that by restructuring the curriculum. He argues that the traditional system of defining and allocating courses by discipline allows professors to avoid confronting each other and leaves students confused. Adding more "politically correct" courses does no good because the professors in these courses are still able to avoid confronting their opponents. In place of consistent indoctrination we get inconsistent indoctrination, but it is still indoctrination rather than real thought. Graff's solution is to create interdisciplinary courses in which professors with different theories will have to address each other, and

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the students will be able to study not merely this or that professor's theory, but the theoretical conflict itself. At first glance this seems a reasonable proposal. There are, however, certain difficulties with it.

The most obvious difficulty lies in Graff's assumption that the relevant cultural differences can be equated with theoretical and methodological differences among disciplines. It is not difficult to imagine an interdisciplinary course taught exclusively by Marxists or by fundamentalist Christians. On the other hand, a course on whether Egypt was a black civilization, for instance—once suggested by Diane Ravitch as a culturally serious counter to the "multiculturalists" in the field of black studies and mentioned with approval by Graff—could accomplish what he wants regardless of the discipline of the professor or the number of professors teaching it. The disciplines in a certain sense do constitute "cultures," but that is because they rest upon certain beliefs about reality and meaning. To the extent that these beliefs are shared by people outside the academy and to the extent that people look to them in making the important decisions in their lives, they are culturally relevant. This is not to say that the academy cannot "teach the conflicts," only that it must first discern accurately what the real conflicts are, and to do that it must look outside itself.

The principle difficulty with Graff's proposal, in other words, stems from his misunderstanding of culture and politics. This misunderstanding is most evident in his equation of culture with theory, his confusion of political with partisan, and his failure to distinguish between teaching students the theories and teaching them to theorize.

Culture is the expression of the identity of a community of people. It expresses their understanding of reality, of the truth about human life generally and themselves in particular. This expression is essentially political, that is, it takes the form of customs or laws that epitomize the community's judgment with respect to what is true and false about life and therefore what is right or wrong, good or evil. Custom governs the imagination and creativity of a community through the rules and limitations of its language, and thus language serves as an excellent analogy for understanding how culture works. That is why literature is such a good exemplar of culture. Before we became sophisticated (and lazy), everyone understood that if one wished to get to know an alien culture the first thing to do was to learn the language.

A "culture war," properly speaking, is a conflict over truth, over reality and its meaning. But because culture is about how we live, what we *do* and not just what we think, a culture war is also a political war. Political stability depends upon agreement not about whether a particular action is right or wrong, but about how to judge it. Politics is always partisan, and there are always winners and losers. What distinguishes politics from war is whether or not both parties can live meaningful lives in the community regardless of whether they win or lose. There can be considerable disagreement within a culture, but so long as there is agreement about what is real, so long as there is a common language, the culture remains intact and partisan conflict can be carried on in speech. When the disagreement is about reality itself, however, language becomes a useless means of disputation and the only resolution is victory in combat. The issue for us today is whether we have reached that state. The recent murder of an abortion doctor may serve as an image for the seriousness of this issue; for if it is no longer possible to use speech to resolve or at least contain our different understandings of good and evil, then the only means left is violence.

This observation makes it all the more imperative for the academy to

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find a way to carry on a conversation, not about theories of good and evil, but about good and evil themselves. By proposing to "teach the conflict" through teaching of theories, Graff has already prejudged in favor of one side, the side that considers all claims to truth to be merely theoretical since truth either does not exist or is unknowable. There is not much to be hoped for from a conversation in which one side's language has been rendered unintelligible—or worse—judged to be baby-talk.

THE IDEA THAT cultural differences can be adequately dealt with by teaching students to compare theories is connected with Graff's understanding of education in general. In a moment of autobiographical candor he describes how he came to value books. He could never really get interested in a book, he says, until he learned to approach it in terms of its cultural significance. Knowing where the book stood in the political contradictions of its time made it relevant to him and enabled him to relate it to real life. Such a double removal from reality bespeaks a serious kind of intellectual impoverishment.

Perhaps the most important motivation behind what might be called a natural relation to reading, in any case the reading of literature, is the desire to understand reality directly, especially oneself and one's own life. This in turn requires reflection on experience, and books offer one the opportunity to experience in imagination more than one can experience directly. Indeed, a book offers two kinds of experience, the author's experience mediated through the book, and the unmediated experience of reading the book itself. It also offers three kinds of reflection or thought: the author's reflection on his own experience, the reader's reflection upon the author's reflection, and, ultimately, the reader's reflection upon the experience of reading the book.

For example, in reading *Heart of Darkness* one can experience indirectly the impact of Africa on Joseph Conrad, and directly, the impact of his descriptions of black people on one's own racial sensitivities. One can then think about what the experience of Africa meant to Conrad, the psychological and spiritual reflections it occasioned for him, about what those reflections mean in the context of history, and finally, about what reading his book means for the understanding of one's own life.

BEFORE ONE CAN experience a book one must be able to read. That includes understanding the language in which the book is written, both its actual language and its symbolic language. To experience the author's experience and understand his reflection upon that experience, one must also be able to set aside one's own perceptions of reality and live for a time in the author's world. The job of the teacher is to teach the student the languages of books and to develop his imaginative capacity to enter other worlds.

In contrast, Graff would have the teacher treat the book as something that cannot be understood in itself, even with much effort, but only in terms of its role in the dialectic of culture. This deprives the student of the added experiential material the book could have given him, and it implicitly teaches him that the critics know more about reality than the author did. Secondly, Graff's emphasis on theory as the key to reality actually removes the student from reality, for it teaches him to distinguish among theories but not to theorize for himself. Real philosophy is not something one studies about, it is something one does.

Finally, the "natural" way to read described above is also the just way to study cultures. Rather than approaching a culture as if it were a theory, would it not be both more just and more interesting to seek simply to experience it as much as one can through learning its language and entering into its world as directly as possible?

A Smith for All Seasons

ADAM SMITH IN HIS TIME AND OURS: DESIGNING THE DECENT SOCIETY. By JERRY Z. MULLER. *Free Press. 272 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by **Michael Novak**

A GOOD WORK of intellectual history should exemplify two qualities above all: an imagination that allows the author to "pass over" into the horizon of his subject in order to see the world as the subject sees it; and a sympathy that enables him to gain a feel for the world of the subject, and for the subject's own internal struggles and aspirations. Like Adam Smith, his subject, intellectual historian Jerry Z. Muller exemplifies these traits to an exceptional degree.

Further, the ideal intellectual history is judged not only by the accuracy of its hold on its subject, but also by the judiciousness and wisdom with which it places that subject in history. Muller's skill in this respect is especially impressive, since in the past Smith's work, while having been supremely important to practical men and women of affairs and, of course, economists, has been much less carefully studied by philosophers and moralists.

For Adam Smith, Muller reminds us, "natural man is social man." Man is naturally endowed with the two dispositions mentioned above, imagination and sympathy. "*Imagination* allows him to put himself in the position of others and to judge his own conduct accordingly," Professor Muller writes. "*Sympathy* allows him to share the emotions of others and to control his own behavior in accordance with shared social standards." Of these two faculties, Adam Smith himself wrote: "These were set up within us to be the supreme arbiters of all our actions, to superintend all our senses, passion, and appetites, and to judge how far each of them was either to

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be indulged or restrained."

Smith eschews the classical Aristotelian language of "reason"; nevertheless, he does not stray far from some of Aristotle's observations toward the end of the *Nichomachean Ethics* on the subject of how children learn to feel pleasure and pain about the right objects. In place of the language of "reason," which by this time means something rather different from what Aristotle meant, Smith prefers the language of settled sentiments, imagination, and sympathy, all the while importing into these terms acts of discrimination and judgment.

For example, to be a person of moral worth, for Smith, is to make one's conduct conform to a standard oriented beyond the immediate, natural passions of the self. The wise man studies the example of others of his time and earlier times, observing and reflecting upon his own actions and the actions of others, in order to discern what makes a good man, and to hold himself to that standard with as much impartiality as he can muster. The wise man "almost identifies himself with, he almost becomes, that impartial spectator, and scarce even feels but as that great arbiter of his conduct directs him to feel." The wise man "endeavors as well as he can to assimilate his own character to this archetype of perfection" and "to fashion his own character and conduct" according to the model of the "impartial spectator." The very term seems to stretch "imagination" and "sympathy" beyond themselves.

BUT ADAM SMITH'S greatest lifetime achievement lay less in his acuity as a moral philosopher, although that was his calling, than as a social philosopher. For his lifetime quest was to try to imagine, before they yet fully existed, the sorts of social institutions that would make the occurrence of acts of imagination and sympathy—guided by the impartial spectator—frequent, regular, and relatively easy for free citizens. He tried to imagine what the basic social institutions of a decent society would look like. In this light, he was a severe critic of the institutions of his own time and place, a practical visionary, and (as we can now see) one of the most realistic revolutionaries of all time.

Thus it is not very surprising that a great revival of Smith studies is under way. One recalls the very good study by Patricia H. Werhane of Loyola University in Chicago, *Adam Smith and His Legacy for Modern Capitalism* (Oxford, 1991); the truly magisterial essays collected by Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff in *Wealth and Virtue* (Cambridge, 1983); and splendid essays by Jacob Viner, Irving Kristol, and Gertrude Himmelfarb, among many others. Of all these, I am now prepared to say, this brief volume by Jerry Z. Muller has become my favorite. For one thing, his twenty-one-page appendix, "Guide to Further Reading," a succinct but meaty commentary, is alone worth the price of the book. His footnotes, too, are penetrating and to the point. But the main factor is that his spare 205 pages of text are quite brilliantly organized to bring out the essential outlines of Smith's humanistic design for the free and decent society and the unfolding logic that led Smith to it.

Adam Smith was born on the east coast of Scotland, in tiny Kirkaldy, in 1723, at a time when Scotland was poor, very largely rural, and (as we would say today) conspicuously underdeveloped. This was in an era in which "property" meant mainly large landholders, and in which patronage, education, and government service—and *not* market-oriented businesses—were the key paths to advancement. Indeed, it is probable that more people in Britain and especially Scotland labored on the great estates of the aristocrats than were employed in the relatively small industries of the time.

Muller's first three chapters sketch Adam Smith's historical and intellectual background, a time of "gentlemen, consumers, and the fiscal-military state." Young Adam Smith was a "cosmopolitan provincial," whose early desire to study for the Christian ministry won him an education at Oxford that prepared him for a university position in ethics. He early became preoccupied with the "phenomenology" (to employ a modern term loosely) of "self-love and self-command," as these worked themselves out in social contexts. In the daily battle between self-love and self-command, Muller points out, lies "the intellectual origin of Smith's civilizing project."

ARISTOTLE had imagined ethics as a department of politics, but in 1687 Newton demonstrated the law of universal gravitation, thus exemplifying the power of science, understood in a new way, to formulate universal laws of remarkable explanatory power; and like others, Smith now wondered if analogous laws might be discovered at work in human society. He conceived of such science as a part of "natural theology," a more humble inquiry than the theology that took as its data the givens of revelation. As he wrote in *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1759):

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> The administration of the great system of the universe . . . the care of the universal happiness of all rational and sensible beings, is the business of God and not of man. To man is allotted a much humbler department, but one much more suitable to the weakness of his powers, and to the narrowness of his comprehension; the care of his own happiness, of that of his family, his friends, his country. The most sublime speculation of the contemplative philosopher can scarce compensate the neglect of the smallest active duty.

Smith therefore explored the psychology of the active person. Moreover, he became poignantly aware from his travels and his studies of the differences impressed on human psychology by historically changing social, political, cultural, and economic institutions. To capture this Smithian focus, Muller coins the admittedly clumsy term "psychological institutionalism" to indicate the bridge Smith tried to build between classical humanistic ethics and the new, fledgling social science (of which he was one of the first practitioners).

The problem Smith deeply felt arose from the visible failure of reason to withstand both the onrush of passion and the power of social institutions and customs. He sought (to borrow Madison's later term) "auxiliary precautions" by which societies might arrange their institutions so as not to leave men stripped of everything but solitary reason. He learned here a great deal from theological controversies of the time about human weakness, sin, and social pressure.

Futhermore, Smith was uncommonly concerned with the fate of common people, such as his beloved mother back in Kirkaldy (his father had died when he was an infant). He wanted to move Scotland (and the world) toward an economy that produced "opulence" for the common people. And he outlined a system that would, he predicted, in fact produce *universal* opulence.

Smith held that a passion for the public interest could only be excited if legislators, voters, and the young came to understand political economy as a "system."

> You will be more likely to persuade, if you describe the great system of public policy which procures these advantages, if you explain the connections and dependencies of its several parts, their mutual subordination to one another, and their general subserviency to the happiness of the society; if you show how this system might be introduced into his own country, what it is that hinders it from taking place there at the present, how these obstructions might be removed, and all the several wheels of government be made to move with more harmony and smoothness, without grating upon one another, or mutually retarding one another's motions. It is scarce possible that a man should listen to a discourse of this kind, and not feel himself animated to some degree of public spirit.

Here in 1759 lay the germinal idea for the project to be addressed in Smith's masterpiece of 1776, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.*

Smith's long labors of these seventeen years uncovered the necessary elements of the decent society, which are detailed by Muller, one by one, in each of the ten chapters that constitute Part II of his book. (These were also years pregnant with meaning for the Republic waiting to be born on this side of the Atlantic. Thomas Jefferson would later call Adam Smith "the master of those who write about political economy.")

Muller begins with a chapter on the market as the social institution best suited to produce "universal opulence" (a term best understood as "steadily rising real wages and steadily declining real costs for basic goods." Now, when Smith was writing, markets were mostly local, heavily regulated by the state for the purposes of the crown, restricted, and relatively closed. But the market contained features that, in Smith's eyes, would call into being a more alert, active, freer, and more moral citizenry than the regime then in place and mainly benefitting landowning aristocrats.

This chapter is followed with one on legislators and merchants; and another on social science as "the anticipation of the unanticipated," in recognition of the law of unintended consequences. These Muller follows with four chapters on the ethical heart of Smith's civilizing project, the ideal of commercial humanism; on the "impartial spectator"; on the historical and institutional foundations of the commercial society; and on the moral balance sheet of the commercial society, not least as compared with historically prior societies and then-existing alternatives.

He next uncovers a part of Smith's thought that my own teachers, years ago, and many books since have studiously and unaccountably neglected: that is, the many highly visible roles that Smith assigned to the political part of political economy, "The Visible Hand of the State." Next are chapters on Smith's sociology of religion and on moral and political leadership in commercial society. Smith emphasizes the higher virtues and noble ideals essential to the health of the decent commercial society to be assiduously cultivated especially in the "small party" of moral and intellectual elites.

IN THE REMAINING three chapters of Part III, Muller first describes the light shed since Smith's death by his critics, friendly and unfriendly. There is hardly a writer in English, save perhaps Smith's ally and friend Edmund Burke, who more frequently crafted memorable and quotable lines; but some of these lines, by their sharp and gleaming elegance, have diverted attention from their surrounding connections and modifications. So Muller adds a chapter on the unintended consequences of some of Smith's own for-

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mulations. Finally, Muller attempts to ferret out what is timeless in Smith from what was important merely for the time in which Smith lived.

I have by no means done justice to Muller's masterful and complex argument, elegantly and briefly stated as it is. Particularly gratifying is Muller's sensitivity to rather subtle themes in the Christian theological discussions of the period, as well as his grasp of the complex ancient and modern sources of Smith's distinctions and turns of argument.

One could wish that more had been made of Smith's indebtedness to the School of Salamanca and, in general, to the careful records the Spaniards compiled of their economic experiments in the New World, from which Smith drew some of the concrete data that grounds the empirical observations of *Wealth of Nations*. The beauty of this book, however, is its comprehensive brevity. Muller outlines Smith's main moral argument better than anyone before him. Harvard's David Landes writes for the jacket that "Jerry Muller is one of the finest intellectual historians alive today," and on the strength of the balance and perspective exhibited here I am inclined to accept that as a fair portent of what this young author will now be condemned to live up to.

After the Fall

Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America. By Mark R. Schwehn. *Oxford University Press. 143 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by **Amy A. Kass**

I am a teacher of undergraduates at a major research university. I am also the mother of two recent college graduates. From both inside and out, I am keenly aware of the troubled state of higher education in America: incoherent curricula, lowered standards, growing politicization, negligent teaching, indifference to the genuine intellectual needs and vital concerns of students. The popular reception accorded recent books and articles critical of the academy makes clear that my concerns are widely shared, at least by those outside our colleges and universities. But few commentators have noticed the tensions and dissatisfactions experienced by the professoriate itself, and no one has in recent years attempted seriously to reexamine the meaning of the academic vocation in modern American life.

Mark Schwehn's *Exiles from Eden* admirably makes up for these omissions. By means of a fresh, penetrating, and exceedingly lucid account of the intellectual and cultural roots of the modern academy, Schwehn sheds light on the cause of the current contradictions experienced by professors who, strangely, have come to regard teaching the young and searching for truth and wisdom as no part of their academic calling. By pointing to the neglected but indispensable communal and spiritual dimensions of the life of learning, Schwehn moves from diagnosis to remedy, offering his own prescription for reorienting and reinspiriting the academic vocation.

By training an intellectual historian, Schwehn critically reviews a wide range of thinkers, past and present, who have addressed his topic. Carefully researched and informed by considerable learning, published by Oxford, the book will pass muster with the guild. But it is not simply an academic's book, for Schwehn is himself no ordinary academic, and he has long known it.

In 1982, Schwehn, then a junior faculty member at the University of Chicago, attended a meeting convened by his senior colleagues in the social sciences. Shortly before the meeting began, one of his colleagues made the following proposal: "We've just recently filed our income tax forms; let's move around the circle from left to right and indicate what each of us wrote under the heading 'occupation.'" Each in turn identified himself in terms of his own professional guild—sociologist, anthropologist, psychologist, and so on. Schwehn, the last to speak, "admitted" ("it certainly felt like an admission," he recalls) that he had written "college teacher." He felt, he says, like "an informant from another culture."

Later that year, Schwehn—a Stanford Ph.D., with a national prize-winning dissertation—resigned his position at the University of Chicago to accept an appointment teaching in Christ College, the honors college of Valparaiso University, a relatively small, and lesser known, church-related university. (He is now Dean of Christ College.) Soon afterwards, he came upon an essay by Clifford Geertz in which Geertz "remarked upon a career pattern peculiar to academics, 'namely that one starts at the center of things and then moves toward the edges.' Most academics, [Geertz] noted, begin their careers at one or another

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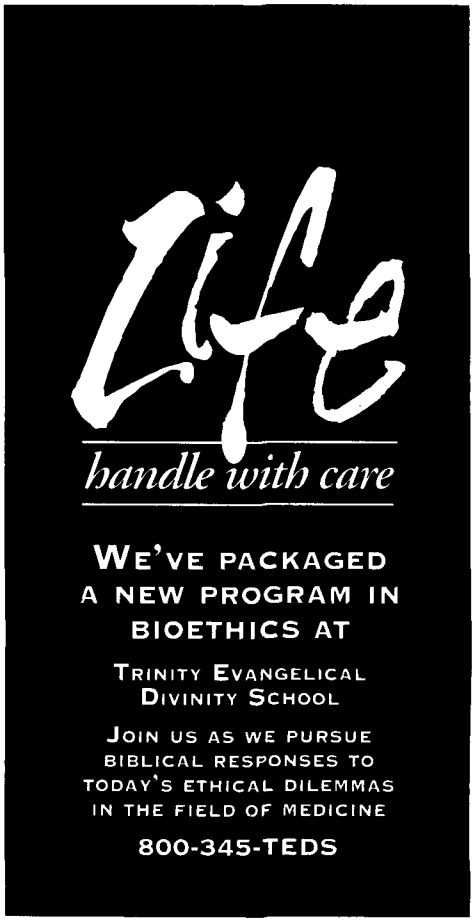
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of the great research universities and then proceed directly to schools that are 'lower down or further out—whatever the image should be.'" Schwehn was especially struck by Geertz's image for the psychic attitude that accompanies this peripheral movement: the "exile from Eden syndrome." Schwehn, a serious Christian and a devoted teacher, had moved to Valparaiso University in order more freely to pursue the sorts of intellectual and human questions and concerns he deemed most important. He had never regarded Stanford or the University of Chicago as Eden. Indeed, quite the contrary. He was well aware, and on higher authority, that "all academics are exiles from Eden; indeed all human beings are in this condition." He thus began to ponder the academic calling. What does it mean to regard the great research university as paradise? What is the implicit "religion" that calls the modern academic? How is it related to Judeo-Christian religious teachings, and to the original Eden?

SCHWEHN'S INQUIRY begins from the following troubling fact: although the work of university faculty is operationally defined by three activities—making or advancing knowledge (research and publishing), transmitting knowledge and skills (teaching), and helping students to lead ethical, fulfilling lives (advising and counseling)—faculty members themselves do not see these activities as interrelated parts of a single vocation. On the contrary, they see them as inherently competing, even contradictory, activities. Most see no relation between what or how they teach and the moral and personal growth of their students. Indeed, they regard their real work as having nothing to do with students. Their true calling, they believe, is rather their own productivity—their own writing, composing, experimenting. "How else could we explain," Schwehn asks, "the familiar academic lament, 'Because this is a terribly busy semester for me, I do not have any time to do my own work'?" In what other vocation do terribly busy people regard their predominant activities as no part of "their own work"? Here, indeed, is a vocation in crisis.

In exploring the origins of the academician's vocational dissonance, Schwehn begins with the obvious socializing influences of our graduate schools, in which future academics are prepared to think that publication is *the* vocational aspiration. The triumph of this view over earlier views that stressed transmission of knowledge and cultivation of character (*Bildung*) Schwehn traces to the ways of inquiring and knowing of the nineteenth-century German universities, given clearest expression by Max Weber in his famous 1918 address, "Wissenschaft als Beruf" ("Science as a Vocation"). As Schwehn shows, Weber saw academic life as both result and cause of the ever-increasing rationalization, intellectualization, and disenchantment of the world, tied also to the idea and cause of progress. Knowledge, sought as part of the quest for power, was to be gained by increasingly specialized inquiry, using formal reasoning and strictly value-neutral concepts. To be a respectable academician required foregoing all large questions of meaning and purpose; it meant narrowing one's sights, devoting oneself, heart and soul, to solving the particular problems one puts to oneself.

According to Schwehn, Weber recognized that the value-free thinking central to his view of academic life could be self-alienating for the academic; on Weber's own grounds, there can be no rational knowledge of whether and why to pursue rationalization. Also, the progress of science means that one's specialized knowledge-creations will have but a brief shelf-life, to be replaced by equally specialized and equally obsolescent products—a potentially dispiriting vision of the life of learning. Addressing the problem of meaning for value-free researchers, Weber deliberately appropriated religious language and categories and attached them to the academic life, transmuting them in the process. One must pursue *wissenschaft* with a blind faith in the ultimate worthwhileness of the pursuit itself. "Whoever lacks the capacity to put on blinders, so to speak," Weber argued, "and to come up to the idea that the *fate of his soul* depends upon whether or not he makes the correct conjecture at this passage of his manuscript may as well stay away from academics."

Not surprisingly, this content-free, value-neutral, and godlessly religious view of the academic life was not in its effect ethically neutral. As Schwehn observes, epistemology is not morally indifferent but indeed morally directive. The Weberian imperative willy-nilly shapes character, fostering, or at least rewarding, certain characteristics: "clarity, but not charity; honesty, but not friendliness; devotion to the calling, but not loyalty to particular and local communities of learning."

RECENTLY THE Weberian way of thinking about thinking has been increasingly criticized, on both moral and epistemological grounds, especially by so-called communitarian thinkers. These provide Schwehn with the beginnings of his own critique. He uses the writings of contemporary thinkers as diverse as the humanist philosopher Richard Rorty and the Christian philosopher Parker Palmer, as well as earlier arguments of Charles Peirce and William James, to articulate ways of knowing more bound up with interpersonal and social relations than with personal integrity, more bent on understanding than on mastery, more given to questioning than to problem-solving, more in pursuit of truth than of power. Schwehn locates his own view of the activities and aspirations central to the work of higher education—teaching, learning, and understanding—in this interpersonal epistemology. Thinking about the university as a community of learning, he argues that the individual classroom constitutes its central community and then proceeds to show how certain "spiritual" virtues—that is, virtues originally celebrated by reli-

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gious thinkers and promoted by religious communities of learning—are required in order to advance disciplined communal conversation, even within the secular academy.

The four virtues that Schwehn discusses are humility, faith, self-denial, and charity. Humility is needed to dispose us to learn from another; faith or belief in ideas we have received from others is necessary to all thought, even thought that criticizes received beliefs; self-denial is required to open our beliefs to critical examination and, more important, our minds to change; and charity, "the greatest of the virtues," is indispensable to all fair and full consideration of subjects and works that come before us. But Schwehn is keenly aware that these virtues have hitherto been nurtured and sustained mainly by the religious affection of piety; he therefore rightly doubts whether in this secular age "they can be sustained over the course of several more generations absent the affections, practices, and institutions as well as the network of beliefs that gave rise to them originally." If the virtues are to survive in the academy, the academic vocation must be radically reconceived on spiritual—though not necessarily pietistic—grounds.

Schwehn invites academics to rediscover the implicit spiritual dimension of their ethos by engaging, together with their students, in what he refers to as "spirited inquiry," inquiry which (once again) seeks truth and understanding, understood not as disembodied, rationalized propositions but as answers to the psychic and spiritual quests of living, engaged human beings. Education must again be "in and for thoughtfulness" in this double sense: encouraging reflection about important human matters, and cultivating the practice of consideration and care for others. Three radical revisions of Weberianism are called for, which Schwehn summarizes as follows:

> First, teaching, not *Wissenschaft*, becomes the activity in terms of which all others—publication, collegiality, research, consultation, advising—are to be understood, interpreted, and appraised. Second, the cultivation of those spiritual virtues that make genuine teaching and learning possible becomes a vitally important aspect of pedagogy. Finally, both charity and *philia*, the loves that Weber banished from the academy, become once again central to its self-conception and to its overall mission in the world.

IF THE ACTIVITY of teaching comes to inform all aspects of what academics do, if teaching itself is self-consciously informed by spiritual virtues, then Schwehn's academicians would find no disjunction between helping students learn and helping them toward ethical and fulfilling lives. Moreover, what academics think about as scholars—the very questions they will ask and research—will necessarily change. Some professors might well be tempted to write about the large, difficult, and important—even if finally unanswerable—questions of human purpose and meaning.

Schwehn regrettably does not tell us which books or subjects ought to be studied in the spirit of spirited inquiry, but he does suggest what that spirit is. Schwehn's academics will not only think *about* thinkers and texts, they will also think *with* them. They will not be content (as are the Weberians) to "ask only whether what someone says about what a text means is true or false, and what such a saying might imply"; they "will also ask whether what a text says about how we are to live and what we are to do is true or false." True, they will likely disagree "about the *answers* to these questions," but, Schwehn insists, "they can and should agree, against the Weberians, that such questions should be asked and answered truthfully throughout the academy." When such conversation involves students, spirited academicians are very likely to encourage the ethical development of their students in the fullest and best way: rather than reward only originality or mere technical mastery, they will encourage thoughtful engagement in the world. By their own engaged example, they will encourage students to find (and not only invent) meaning, even in the very traditions in which they were reared.

If so many people are dissatisfied with the Weberian academy, why hasn't something been done about it? Because, Schwehn argues, it is reinforced by a peculiarly modern and secular spirituality that "gives a deep measure of meaning to the academic vocation as Weber described it and at the same time blinds its practitioners to their own necessary reliance on virtues that are distinctively religious." To convey this modern spirituality, Schwehn turns to a critical rehearsal of the life and work of Henry Adams, who, himself

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an academician, "suffered through, worried over, and finally helped to create [this] very situation." It is especially in Adams' modernist classic, *The Education of Henry Adams*, that Schwehn finds the connection he seeks between the modern quest for meaning and the deformities of higher education.

YOUNG Henry Adams, the protagonist of Adams' *Education*, like most young people, initially saw the world as divided between truth and error, good and evil. Thanks to his native optimism and, no doubt, also to his own illustrious ancestors, he had every reason to believe that God was provident and that the virtuous would forever prevail in this country, himself most of all. However, the world transformed by science and technology and by the Civil War was inhospitable to his aspiration to lead, and he painfully came to see the inadequacy of his own dualistic view of the universe. Vigorously questing for a substitute worldview comparable in comprehensiveness to the one he abandoned, Adams—like so many of today's students—observed many things, experienced many ways, and studied many beliefs, finally concluding that all views are equally valid, which is to say no one view is true. Yet, he did not rest easy in his acquired relativism; again, like our students, he wanted his life to have meaning. He finally found meaning only when he created it for himself. Schwehn writes:

> The creature Adams [i.e., the protagonist of the *Education*] registers the disappearance of his Creator by becoming the author of himself—both creator and authority. His wandering spirit seeks not reunion or reconciliation with the divine, but further estrangement from both the divine and the human—thus he charts the course of modern alienation by presenting one person's repeatedly futile efforts to *discover* meaning in the world around him. Yet, the *Education* represents that very "formula of his own" by which its author *made* sense of his life to himself and to hundreds of modern readers after him.

Adams explicitly wrote his *Education* for young people in universities or elsewhere, to help them become "men of the world, fit for any emergency." But in the end, this came to mean each man his own authority, each man his own creator, each man his own artist. In the increasingly secularized world, the only really meaningful life is that of the "man-made self." A rootless life freed of tradition, it is a life ripe for adherence to the outlooks of our Weberian academic "fathers."

Adams' "spirituality" was achieved by consciously transmuting the religious teachings that had nurtured him, in particular, by subverting the biblical account of creation and man's dependence on his Creator. In response, Schwehn critically reviews and analyzes Genesis 2-3 in order to assess the adequacy of Adams' view of our spiritual condition. Returning to the true Eden, before the transgression, Schwehn notices three important things: first, Adam, the human prototype, is moved to speak—to discern and distinguish, to develop his reason—in order to overcome his loneliness, in order to find a partner; second, Adam and the woman are intimately and naturally connected with one another—woman *is* flesh of man's flesh, bone of man's bone; and third, although human life is informed by a prohibition, and hence limited, it is nevertheless harmonious, peaceful, and whole. Reason and knowledge, Schwehn infers, are thus naturally and intimately linked to sociality and community, not to alienation and estrangement; at least at the beginning Eden is paradise.

By the end of Genesis 3, however, the opposite condition prevails. Grasping for knowledge in order to become like gods—that is, in order to gain power—our human forebears become, instead, vulnerable, self-conscious, and powerless. They become, in important respects, more recognizably human beings—independent and autonomous—but they pay an enormous price: alienation from themselves, estrangement from one another, permanently at odds with the world around them. In a word, they become—and still are—exiles.

But, Schwehn argues, "If Genesis 3 diagnoses and describes our present predicament, Genesis 2 remains the horizon of our hopes. It is one thing to say that we are permanently flawed, quite another to suggest that we should act to deepen and maintain those flaws as though they were divinely ordained." Human beings can and ought to seek knowledge to relieve suffering—they can and ought to pursue *wissenschaft*—as long as they remain mindful of their natural limits, as long as they are imbued with a sense of piety. Schwehn's journey back to Eden serves, then, not merely as a corrective to Henry Adams' assessment of our human condition, but as a support for Schwehn's whole inquiry. For in this profound story, Schwehn finds both the permanent source of the human dilemma and grounds to support his own positive recommendations. He enables us to see why it is only through spiritual renewal that the groves of academe can again enable human beings to lead meaningful and fruitful lives.

SCHWEHN WRITES wisely and with grace; he analyzes and criticizes the writings with which he deeply disagrees as thoughtfully as he does those with which he is in basic sympathy. He exhibits on almost every page the very virtues he would have us cultivate. And he makes a very reasonable case for the importance of reviving spiritual virtues and a concern with meaning in higher education, in church-related and secular universities alike. Yet precisely this very reasonable recommendation gives me pause, notwithstanding Schwehn's explicit attempt to defend his redescription of the academic calling against such possible criticisms.

Schwehn does not call for any

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wholesale or structural reform in the academy. He believes that individual teachers in individual classrooms matter most, and it is with these that changes must begin. But where are such teachers to be found and trained, especially absent structural reform of graduate education? How common are intellectual historians as devoted as Schwehn to "spirited inquiry" and the well-being of undergraduate students? If college teachers continue to be qualified by specialized graduate research, studying under people steeped in the Weberian ethos, where, when, and how will other Schwehns be generated? This problem of educating the teachers points, in turn, to a still greater difficulty.

Schwehn does not intend to advance church-related colleges and universities over secular institutions, and he has no patience with nostalgia for the medieval synthesis of reason and faith. He does intend, however, to reinspirit higher education by imbuing it with "secular piety." But one must still wonder whether so-called piety stripped of its theological moorings can be intellectually and culturally sustained. Can "secular piety" taught by teachers who have not themselves been reared in faith ever really take root?

Most perplexing of all, however, is the alliance of the pursuit of truth and piety that lies at the very core of Schwehn's recommendation. Schwehn points to Plato's Socrates (among others) as an exemplar of what he advocates. He sees him as a relentless pursuer of truth, but with a "robust" sense of piety. Wherein, however, lies Socrates' piety? Most readers of *The Apology of Socrates* side with Socrates against the city that condemns him to death, but their support seems hardly to be based on Socrates' piety. Indeed, Schwehn's own "humble readers" will be led to wonder whether Socrates wasn't really guilty as charged. What god does Socrates follow? Socrates himself impresses upon us the utter idiosyncratic nature of his *daimon*. Further, it was not the Delphic Oracle that gave him his philosophic mission; rather, Socrates himself, perplexed about its meaning, set out to prove the oracle false. Moreover, Plato's *Republic*, his fullest dialogue on the subject of education, makes abundantly clear that Socratic inquiry is utterly radical in nature. The Socratic "why?" is not limited by anything other than the truth, which the true philosopher pursues relentlessly. True, Socrates like Schwehn believes in the close connection between the growth of intellectual and moral virtue, but the virtues he looks to are courage not self-denial, moderation not humility, wisdom not faith, justice not charity. If education is finally to be in and for thoughtfulness, but if we are spiritedly to pursue the truth after the model of Socrates, will we really come to be genuinely thoughtful in both of Schwehn's senses? Will we really learn to observe the limit and honor the divine without which there is no piety?

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE CHURCH AND ABORTION: IN SEARCH OF NEW GROUND FOR RESPONSE. Edited by PAUL T. STALLSWORTH. *Abingdon. 152 pp. $10.95 paper.*

Although it is prepared by and for Methodists, you don't have to be a Methodist to welcome this important contribution. The contributors are Ruth S. Brown, Michael J. Gorman, Stanley Hauerwas, and William Willimon. Each offers a bracing challenge, albeit from different perspectives, to oldline Protestantism's failure to come clean on what is involved in the abortion debate. An ideal book for study groups.

DEADLY COMPASSION: THE DEATH OF ANN HUMPHRY AND THE TRUTH ABOUT EUTHANASIA. By RITA MARKER. *Morrow. 310 pp. $18.*

When she was diagnosed as having cancer, Ann Humphry was abandoned and publicly scorned by her husband Derek Humphry, the founder of the Hemlock Society. In her last year Ann turned for friendship and counsel to the author, whom she had met as an opponent of Hemlock's campaign for euthanasia and assisted suicide. This is a thoughtful and readable account of that remarkable relationship and includes devastating insights into the personalities and purposes of the euthanasia movement. An appendix contains "Always to Care, Never to Kill," the statement on assisted suicide produced by the Institute on Religion and Public Life. *Deadly Compassion* is warmly recommended as a book that readers will want to pass on to friends who are confused by the seductive rhetoric of "death with dignity."

CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRACY IN GLOBAL CONTEXT. Edited by JOHN WITTE. *Westview. 324 pp. $49.95.*

The product of an important conference at Emory University that brought together scholars, clerics, and activists from several continents and many persuasions. Contributors include Bryan Hehir, Jean Bethke Elshtain, James Skillen, Paul Sigmund, Desmond Tutu, and Richard John Neuhaus. The book is a valuable contribution to understanding the ways in which Christianity both undergirds and challenges the global movement toward democratic governance.

THE REAL WORLD ORDER: ZONES OF PEACE/ZONES OF TURMOIL. By MAX SINGER and AARON WILDAVSKY. *Chatham House. 201 pp. $25 cloth, $16.95 paper.*

This is a deliberately provocative and speculative thought exercise in how the world will be a hundred years from now. It helps us to think more clearly about the world today when the Cold War and the old order have passed. The authors are guardedly hopeful that the poor nations of the world (those outside the democratic zone of peace) will within the next seventy or one hundred years achieve a measure of prosperity and democratic gover-

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nance comparable, say, to that of Greece or Portugal. Key to their argument is the belief that democracy makes for peace and their assumption, backed by persuasive argument, that Russia will not be a dominant or even major international player in the decades ahead. They probably underestimate the negative influence of militant Islam in large parts of the world, but such disagreements with the authors do not detract from the value of this bold and suggestive work.

READINGS IN THE CLASSICAL HISTORIANS. Edited by MICHAEL GRANT. *Macmillan. 686 pp. $32.50.*

Among Matthew Arnold's many memorable observations is this one: "Commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practice it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience; they are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live." Those interested in acquiring such a "steadying and composing" influence will find a most useful introduction to the ancients in this collection, edited by the eminent classicist Michael Grant. In a single volume Grant presents essential selections from the ancient historians: Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Julius Caesar, Sallust, Josephus, Livy, Tacitus, Appian, and others. The editor's commentaries provide these diverse fragments with context and coherence.

FAITH WITHOUT PREJUDICE: REBUILDING CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD JUDAISM. Revised and Expanded Edition. By EUGENE J. FISHER. *Crossroad. 208 pp. $24.95.*

Originally published in 1977, this updated version of *Faith Without Prejudice* is most welcome. In it, Eugene J. Fisher, Director of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C., provides detailed description of post-Vatican II teachings meant to combat anti-Semitism and give Christians an appreciation for historical and living Judaism, particularly its affinities with Christianity, which are seen as being far more extensive than recognized in previous times. Included also is an updated bibliography plus practical information for interfaith dialogue.

BUTTERCUPS, AND SO FORTH. By ROBERT GREER COHN. *Lantern Editions (Menlo Park, CA). 144 pp.*

A charming, if bittersweet, autobiographical memoir of his first thirty years by a Professor Emeritus of French at Stanford University. Best known for his lifetime work on Mallarmé, Cohn was Founding Editor of *Yale French Studies* and author of *The Poetry of Rimbaud.* A concluding note ruefully remarks "the creeping, and sometimes rampant, neo-barbarism and politicization" that overtook academia after 1968 and that cast a shadow on an otherwise rewarding forty-year career of teaching and writing.

Straw Hat

The sun filters
through the filigree
and sprinkles dot lights
upon my face
as I draw musky breath:
each draught,
humid hay,
salty, delicious.

This straw hat
was Dad's.
I had forgotten
until I sensed his smell,
lifted it,
and saw his sweat mark
upon the band.

The scorching sun
fed desperation
and blanked memory.
Thoughtless, I snatched it
from the peg
at the cottage this morning.

I walk upon the beach.
His essence is in my head—
his hat, the lid.

Derrel E. Emmerson

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Main Street, Parkers Prairie (Later Old Town)

They have waited all their lives
for train tracks to lace them to other towns,
and now the word comes down. The Soo Line will
build tracks and a depot, but two miles away.
The Soo Line will pay to move their houses.
They clash like caroms colliding,
some of them long to shoot two miles away,
some of them want to be buried where they are.

For twenty years they have forgiven
one another's lateness, stunning
bad smells, cluttered houses.
They had seen what their odds were
when they first staggered
to Lake Adley through a snow storm
so violent it seemed alive.
They pulled their houses
close as wagons around this wide dirt street,
pitched each roof, the gables,
chimneys, all of it made up
from fear and desperate hope.

And now it's summer, 1903.
Children are eating wild choke cherries
and playing in the skirts of wild grasses.
Across the prairie, the lucky ring of hammers
on railroad spikes. Already the men have put up
an A where the depot roof will be. It stands out
against the sky, a letter at the beginning,
a letter they've voted to love.
Yesterday they invented the name, Old Town,
for the place where they used to suffer,
and now all the meadow-larks-of-the-blood
are singing while the people watch their houses,
the First Baptist Church, the Manhattan Hotel on wagons,
rolling across the prairie toward their future.

Jeanne Murray Walker

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Immigration and the Aliens Among Us

Like many American Jews, Martin Peretz, editor in chief of *The New Republic*, had until now a deep inhibition about ever, ever visiting Germany. But he took the plunge and returns with some instructive observations about that country, and ours. Germans, he suggests, have almost gone overboard to "mortify themselves over anti-Semitism despite Germany having done more to purge this poison than any other country in Europe." He writes admiringly of Germany as Europe's "most responsible collective citizen" in responding to the masses of refugees trekking Westward as a consequence of the turmoils following the collapse of Communism. Although shortly after his visit Berlin put new restrictions on such mass immigration, one doubts that this would change Peretz's respect for the German model as the world tries to cope with changing notions of citizenship and nationhood.

"The advanced countries," Peretz writes, "are now having to choose between being civic nations and ethnic nations, a choice they could elude so long as huge masses of 'others' did not pass through their portals. It was easy to be a civic nation of individuals until new ethnics with new demands for ethnic rights put into question what 'we' meant. This is tinder-box material, especially when ethnic and racial minorities demand cultural and political outcomes that they want to deny to the defining or founding majorities. This has not quite occurred in Germany, at least not yet, but it is happening in the United States."

The distinction between an ethnic and civic nation is important but not as clear-cut as it may at first appear. Civic habits and presuppositions are not unrelated to what we have come to call ethnicity. The civic nation is not simply one of "individuals" but of individuals tied to communities of memory, character, and mutual help. But it is true that, from earlier discussions about the "melting pot" through today's patter about "gorgeous mosaics," most Americans have insisted that the United States has never been an ethnic nation. That claim has frequently tended to overlook the degree to which the "founding and defining" majority in the American project was, at least until fairly recently, Anglo-Saxon and very Protestant. Scholars can dispute whether Anglo-Saxon—or even North European—qualifies as an ethnic group, but nobody moderately familiar with American beginnings doubts that the founders and definers were not, for example, Arab, African, or Japanese.

The synthesis of Puritan religion and the philosophy of John Locke that defined the civic nation presupposed cultural, moral, and even theological assumptions. The Puritan "errand in the wilderness" and sense of Providential mission, as well as the constitutional bid for a *novus ordo seclorum*, are the product of a singular cultural phenomenon that, somewhat paradoxically, imprinted upon the American mind both the conviction of universal purpose and the conviction of being a people apart. With what might be called the Protestant Descendency of the last century—a decline recently accelerated by new waves of immigration—these constituting convictions are being sorely tested. It is by no means clear that millions of new citizens can easily be educated to embrace the institutions and procedures of the civic nation without reference to the cultural-ethnic history that brought those institutions and procedures into being.

We should be disturbed but not surprised that there is today a rising agitation—mainly on the right but not only on the right—against massive, some say uncontrolled, immigration to the United States. There is little disagreement about the scandal of a great nation not being able to impose discipline upon access to its borders, notably its border with Mexico. But the present and building debate is about much more than that. It is once again becoming respectable to fret in public about the declining birth

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rate among Americans of native stock (the "founding and defining" part of the population that may soon no longer be a majority). The huge influx of Latin American, Asian, and Middle Eastern immigrants poses, it is argued, a possibly fatal threat to the civic nation, precisely because the civic nation depends upon undergirding habits and presuppositions that are historically and at present inseparable from cultural and ethnic experience. The great truths proclaimed by "We the People" presuppose some notion of the people involved. Are the "alien hordes" who have no real relationship to that people, aside from envy of their material success and wanting to share in it, capable of internalizing the civic nation's foundational truths that are inescapably derived from a particularist history of beliefs about, for instance, Nature and Nature's God?

These anxieties about immigration are hardly new, but neither are they dismissable simply as a replay of the Nativism of the last century. The Protestant Descendency, a felt threat in the nineteenth century, is now undeniable reality. The patterns and communities of adhesion that then made it possible to think of America as a nation have become increasingly tenuous. It is not unreasonable to worry that Madison, Jefferson, and others are being vindicated in their fear that our civic institutions were not designed for, and cannot survive, what they called a "vastly extended Republic." However right he was about slavery—and he was undoubtedly right about slavery—Lincoln may have been wrong in thinking that the war that effected its abolition could secure a nation "so conceived and so dedicated." The conception and dedication was the handiwork of the founding and defining leadership that, even in the 1860s, feared that it was losing its hold on the nation's future.

The arguments and agitations about immigration that are now gaining currency do indeed raise questions about what is meant by "we" and about the meaning of civic and cultural nationhood. This is "tinder-box material," but much of the anxiety is, in our view, misdirected. It is possible that the millions of new Americans arriving in recent years will turn out to be a force alien to and alienating from the American experiment. But that fear was much more politically potent, and perhaps plausible, in the late-nineteenth century when the country faced the "invasion of the great unwashed," composed mainly of Catholics, Jews, Slavs, and others who had not been part of the founding and defining moment. Such fears turned out to be unjustified as the nation rightly took pride in its demonstrated powers of assimilation, in its ability to "Americanize" the newcomers into a population that revivified the founding and defining ideas of the American enterprise.

The preponderance of evidence today suggests that immigrants continue to be a revivifying force in our national life. Asians in particular demonstrate an astonishing capacity to enter into the economic and educational dynamics of American opportunity. In polyglot immigrant communities such as those found in Queens, New York, where peoples from fifty or more nations live together in remarkable amity, the level of American patriotism is almost embarrassingly robust. As Linda Chavez has recently reminded us (*Out of the Barrio*), the largest immigrant group, the Hispanics, is in fact many distinct groups, almost all of whom enthusiastically embrace the chance to enter into the mainstream American experience. (The possible exception being Puerto Ricans, who, by virtue of their peculiar ties to the United States, have been infected by the mindset of being an alienated and victimized minority.)

Admittedly, the story of the present chapter of immigrant history is still unfolding. It is possible that some of those from the most radically different religio-cultural background—Muslims come most immediately to mind—will assertively and collectively dissent from the foundational beliefs of our constitutional order. But this is highly speculative. Muslims are still a relatively small immigrant group. Despite higher and much publicized claims to the contrary, there are probably no more than a million Muslim immigrants in America. And to the extent that there is an organized Muslim immigrant community, its leadership is determined to demonstrate that Muslims are good Americans. Witness the still nascent but eager Muslim efforts to develop "dialogue" relationships along the lines of the long-standing Jewish-Christian dialogues.

A serious problem is posed by the aliens among us, but it is not the problem perceived by those who are agitating an anti-immigration agenda. The aliens among us are not the recent immigrants but sectors of the population that have been here for a very long time and have, for many and complex reasons, become alienated from the American experiment. One thinks, for instance, of the urban and mainly black underclass that is dangerously marginalized from the opportunities and responsibilities of the societal mainstream. Their alienation is exacerbated and exploited by a civil rights overclass that persists in preaching the calumny that the American experiment is inherently and incorrigibly racist. It is far from clear that the civil rights leadership really wants black Americans to be full participants in the society. The political alliance between the civil rights establishment and the gay and lesbian movement, for example, seems designed to guarantee that many blacks will continue to think of themselves as marginal, for homosexuals who constitute no more than 2 or 3 percent of the population are the very definition of social marginality.

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More influential than the exploited black underclass are the aliens among us who are entrenched in elite positions of cultural leadership, notably in the media, the arts, and academe. In the nineteenth century, the cultural elites had few doubts about their responsibility to "Americanize" the newcomers to these shores. That is not the case today. It is commonly proposed among journalists, writers, academics, and a significant portion of the religious leadership that to be Americanized, to be assimilated into this putatively unjust social order, is to be victimized. The multicultural fevers that have seized upon almost the entirety of the American academy reflect an explicit and rancorous rejection of the core beliefs and institutions of the civic nation and the cultural experience that undergirds it.

If there is "tinder-box material" in problems posed by immigration, the fault lies not with the new immigrants but with members of the "defining and founding" population who have turned themselves into aliens in their own land. There are, however, countervailing forces to those in the societal elites who have abdicated their responsibility to transmit to new Americans the promise and obligations of the citizenship to which they aspire. The Protestant Descendency has been largely a decline of the oldline denominations, and in recent decades it has been at least partially countered by the ascendency of a newly assertive evangelical Protestantism that will no longer accept its exclusion from defining how we conduct business in the public square. These "new" Protestants are really the old Protestants redivivus. They are, for instance, quite prepared to pick up the religio-cultural task implicit in the Puritan perception that this is a covenanted nation devoted to "self-evident truths" about humanity and moral duty.

And there are sixty million Catholics, composed mainly of the descendents of the great unwashed, for whom the American dream has been generally vindicated. Perhaps in a quest for social status, some Catholics have followed the Protestant definers and founders into the wilderness of alienation from the American experience. But the general Catholic pattern gives credence to John Courtney Murray's musings of forty years ago that the day would come when Catholics would have to pick up from oldline Protestants in providing moral and religious legitimation for what he called "the American proposition." Catholics, who bore the stigma and realized the promise of the immigrant experience, are not likely candidates for the new anti-immigration campaign that may now be underway.

Nobody should argue against a more rational control of the flow of immigration to this country. A country that loses control of its borders loses something of its sovereignty and self-respect. But more rational control need not mean reduced immigration. The problem of immigration is posed not by the aliens who are coming but by the aliens who are among us. Americans who understand and affirm our defining and founding moment can confidently welcome and assist the millions who will in the years ahead come to seek their piece of that moment's promise. This will only happen, however, if we recognize that the choice is not between our being a civic nation of disengaged individuals or an ethnic nation of group solidarity. The time is long past when America had the option of being an ethnic nation. The hope is to be a civic nation, a community of communities, held together by the shared affirmation of the original definers and founders that "We hold these truths." Given the generally sorry record of nations trying to cope with the challenge of unity in diversity, America has not done at all badly in the past, and keeping that in mind can help it do even better in the future.

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UPPING THE ANTE

Government funding of abortions through Medicaid and other agencies has upped the ante for Christian citizens, according to David Carlin, a Democratic politician in Rhode Island. Of course Christians might object to many government programs, but distinctions are in order, says Carlin. "But there are moral objections—and then again, there are moral objections. It is one thing to hold a mild moral objection to a government program; an objection that is peripheral to one's fundamental beliefs and values, not central; an objection grounded on intuitive preference not closely tied to one's religious and ecclesial commitments. (Let us call this a Class I objection.) It is quite something else to hold an intense moral objection that is central to one's basic belief and values, grounded on carefully thought-out principles and intimately connected with one's church and religion. (Let us call this a Class II objection.) If we picture a spectrum running from Class I objections at one end to Class II objections at the other, we will find that most moral objections to government programs cluster toward the Class I end. In such cases, we may grumble and protest and promise to vote against the perpetrators next election day, but we do not feel that we have become victims of an outrage. We do not experience the sense of having been violated in the depths of our personality. But on those rare (and for most people perhaps nonexistent) occasions when we hold Class II objections, we do indeed feel a sense of having been outraged and violated. Or it might be more

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accurate to say this: We feel that certain values more important than our mere individual personalities have been violated, and it is only because we are committed to those values that we ourselves, indirectly as it were, become victims of an outrage. In an earlier age many Americans had Class II objections to the Mexican War and the Fugitive Slave Act. More recently, many had Class II objections to the Viet Nam War."

Yet most Christians hesitate to draw the conclusions pertinent to our new circumstance. Carlin writes: "American religious believers have been reluctant to cry 'foul' and to claim that their religion is unfairly under attack. At least in part this *reluctance stems from an historical bad conscience.* Their view of history convinces them that the history of religion, especially the history of Christianity, has all too often been a history of intolerance. Thus they are slow to claim to be the victims of a sin which their forebears so often committed and which, they fear, may be a tendency inherent in their religion. That this view is somewhat out of date—deriving as it does from Voltaire and Gibbon—is beside the point. The fact that so many hold the view is what counts here."

Those who do not effectively protest, argues Carlin, invite further bullying: "The injury done to religious believers and denominations by Medicaid abortions and 'Rainbow' curriculums does not amount to religious persecution. It is not the late-twentieth-century equivalent of throwing Christians to the lions and bears. But without question it is an injury. It definitely does involve violations of the social contract. If religious believers are too modest to insist on their rights—to insist just as emphatically that the secularists abide by the social contract as the secularists have insisted that the believers abide by it—then they must expect a train of further violations to follow."

Carlin, a Catholic and political liberal, is perhaps a bit embarrassed to find himself sounding a little like those who are dismissively referred to as "the religious right." For the last several years, and notably during the 1992 campaign, one frequently encountered news reports referring simply to "the Christians" or "the Christian position" on this or that issue. Whatever one thinks of the religion and politics mix today, there is something eerie and maybe a little wonderful in the observation that, at the beginning and the end of these two millennia, one witnesses a decaying empire complaining about the problems posed by the Christians. (The reader may protest that the United States is not a decaying empire, but this is written on Thursday and on Tuesdays and Thursdays the stench is undeniable.)

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A RADICAL PROPOSAL

When this writer first went to Africa in 1971, he was able to visit about twenty-five countries over a period of months. Most of them seemed to offer hope of tolerable living conditions, politically and economically. Almost a quarter-century later, most of these countries have slid from crisis to catastrophe. To think of Africa is to weep.

In this connection, British historian Paul Johnson has made a proposal that has roused a good deal of interest, and of ire. He suggests that the world should move toward a reestablishment of colonialism, or, if people prefer, a United Nations-sponsored trusteeship system. The United States humanitarian intervention in Somalia got him to writing about this. "As things stand, the American intervention in Somalia will fail because it is merely military, not political also. It rests on the baseless assumption that an honest and efficient government of Somalia can eventually be created from among the local politicians. That is a fantasy, and it applies to many other African states (and one or two outside Africa, such as Haiti). The helpless Somalis can have no hope of a safe, prosperous future except as a colony of one of the civilized powers. The idea is not new. The Versailles Treaty tried to deal with the problem of inchoate states by the trustee system."

Under the "mandates" of the old trustee system, Johnson argues, places such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Tanganyika (now Tanzania) were much better governed than they have been since independence. "This applies to the Sudan, an Anglo-Egyptian condominium which was the model for the League's trustee formula; it made spectacular and rapid progress as a colony, and since independence has become a blood-soaked and starving ruin."

This Johnson quotes Samuel Johnson, "First, clear your mind of cant." That, according to this Johnson, is what we must do to move beyond the excuses usually given for Africa's disasters. "Creating a UN trustee system will involve dismissing a fatal illusion that most African problems are created by colonialism or demographics or shortage of credit or natural, climatic disaster. All the horrors, including famine, are directly created by government: bad, incompetent, or corrupt government—usually all three together—or no government at all." Relief assistance, says Johnson, more often than not reinforces the power of dictators and warlords who control its distribution. He continues: "Indeed, for more than 30 years the international community has been treating symptoms, not causes. The basic cause is obvious but is never publicly admitted: most African states are not fit to govern themselves. Their continued existence, and the violence and human

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degradation they breed, are a threat to stability and peace as well as an affront to our consciences. It is not a question of giving time to inchoate states to learn the art of self-government. One of the most miserable of them, Liberia, goes back to the 1840s (Haiti to the 1790s): its cry for help was voiced by a desperate Liberian, when three rival bands of heavily armed savages were engaged in slaughtering (and in some cases eating) civilians as well as each other. He said to a U.S. Marine guarding the embassy, 'For God's sake come and govern us!'"

Johnson intends to be provocative, and he is. The easiest reaction is to say that his proposal is racist. He makes a point of arguing, however, that countries such as India, China, and multiethnic Russia should have major roles in the UN system that he envisions (if they ever get their own acts together). But that still leaves the black African nations in a somewhat singular category (Johnson allows that Botswana is decently governed). What is one to say? Obviously, there cannot and should not be a return to colonialism in any meaningful sense of the term. Not only is the word heaped with opprobrium, but the world has changed too dramatically.

And yet, we expect that the intervention in Somalia is a precedent, not a case standing by itself. It is worth asking what that precedent may portend. It may be that in the coming years there will be the development of some kind of United Nations-sponsored system of shared or guided governance. Where beastly things happen to masses of people because of the cruelty, corruption, incompetence, or absence of government, there will be among the powers of the world a strong impulse toward thinking that something should be done. If it can be done within the bounds of bearable costs. The time is now for students of the morality of politics among nations to be giving this prospect some very careful thought.

For our sins, or as testimony to our civic highmindedness, we were appointed by President Bush to a presidential commission on improving the effectiveness of the UN. Perhaps by the time this appears, the commission will have issued its report. Whether the report will include the question of building a trusteeship system is not certain, but it certainly was discused in meetings. One influential ambassador noted that there are nations that have a stake in "the international system," nations that are defiant of that system, and others that can only be called "failed nations." Somalia, Haiti, and too many others are in the last category, with yet more waiting to join them. Those participating in the discussions agreed that it would not be possible to use the "condescending" language of trusteeship, but perhaps the UN could employ the more neutral language of "constitution building." In any event, Paul Johnson's argument is probably prescient as well as provocative, and it seems likely that it will be around for a while.

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CONTROVERSIES ENOUGH

The headlines had it that the Pope had finally admitted that the Church was wrong about Galileo. That, you may recall, was late last fall, and many commentators had a little fun with how long it takes Catholicism to catch up with what everybody knows. Now Robert Spaeth of St. John's University in Minnesota has taken a second look at what John Paul actually said and he concludes that there really was no apology or admission of error—at least not explicitly so—with respect to the Church's treatment of Galileo more than three hundred years ago. Spaeth finds the recent papal statements most unsatisfactory and cites Lord Acton, who wrote in a letter to Cardinal Newman, "It is the presumption in favor of papal acts, the tenderness for papal examples, that is the difficulty for Catholicism." Spaeth opines, "Owing to John Paul II's unwillingness to speak unambiguously about Galileo, the controversy will continue."

One might ask whether in this century there has been anything deserving the term controversy with respect to Galileo and the Catholic Church. That the earth revolves around the sun is pretty well accepted, or so it seems to us. As it is accepted that most of the ecclesiastical and scientific authorities, backed by the papacy, were wrong about Galileo. Do we really need the Pope to say what we all know to be the case? As for Acton's complaint, a certain "tenderness" toward one's predecessors' acts seems not unlike a virtue in these indelicate times. Now if the Pope had said that the scientific and ecclesiastical establishments back then were correct in condemning the Copernican theory, Catholics might have a problem. But he didn't, and they don't. *Pace* Professor Spaeth, there are controversies enough without scraping the historical barrel for yet others.

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A PALEOLIBERAL CREED

The following excerpt from an essay they published is cited by the editors of *Commonweal*, the liberal lay Catholic magazine, to promote subscriptions. Presumably, it represents the spirit of what today is

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meant by Commonweal Catholicism. Readers can readily substitute Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, or whatever, for the word Catholic. The essay, by Nancy M. Haegel, is a rather touching affirmation of an older form of liberalism, by no means dead, that is deserving of careful attention.

As Catholic Christians,
we embark from
an immense tradition
of belief,
and yet it is only that—
an embarking point.
Ultimately, we must each call
upon our own individual experience.
I have had just enough of what
might be termed "religious experience"
to entice, startle, and intrigue me.
Just enough so that
I can never deny it, but not
so much that I don't wonder,
in an expression I heard somewhere,
why "God is so damn subtle."
So if my work colleagues
know that I am a Catholic,
they know that I am
a doubting and tolerant one,
believing in a God
who is merciful with our doubts
and prefers them
to our certainties.

Note, first, that the "immense tradition of belief" is only prelude. Paul, Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Catherine of Sienna, Thomas Aquinas, all the way through von Balthasar—it is all an embarking point, and "only that." An embarking point is what you leave behind, it is what you are freed from in order to get on with—what? Why, with ME, with "our own individual experience." That experience, we are told, entices, startles, and intrigues. The question of truth does not arise, at least not directly. Her own experience is strong enough that she cannot deny it, but not so strong that she does not wonder. Presumably, strong conviction, even conviction about one's own experience, is the enemy of wonder. God is indeed often subtle, all must agree, but the point of Christianity is God's revelation of himself. Revelation does not figure in this creed, unless "individual experience" counts as such.

"So if my work colleagues know that I am a Catholic . . . " *If*. It is not the kind of thing about which one is public in these very secular times, don't you know. It is not the kind of thing that is so important a part of me that anyone who knows me would know it. But if, despite all, they do happen to find out that I am Catholic, "they know that I am a doubting and tolerant one." A convinced and faithful Catholic, it is suggested, would likely not be tolerant. Catholicism wholeheartedly embraced, it follows, is intolerant. No anti-Catholic, or anti-Christian, could have put it more succinctly.

From, presumably, the revelation of her individual experience, she has learned to believe "in a God who is merciful with our doubts and prefers them to our certainties." The God of biblical revelation is certainly merciful with our doubts, there is no doubt about that. But he prefers our doubts to our certainties? God is, we are asked to believe, displeased with St. Paul's "I am persuaded" (Romans 8) or a congregation boldly asserting, "We believe in God, the Father Almighty . . . " And is the only thing exempt from Ms. Haegel's doubt the certainty that God prefers doubts to certainties? How on earth did she arrive at that certainty, which she seems not at all to doubt?

The paleoliberal creed puts one in mind of Chesterton's remark about an absolutely open mind being like a constantly open mouth, never able to come down on anything solid. This affirmation, which *Commonweal* offers as representative of its editorial posture, calls for a tentative, timorous search for truth in the understanding that truth—truth for sure—is not to be found. It is an embarrassed Catholicism. "Yes, I admit to being a Catholic, but, despite that, I am not (fill in any caricatures of Catholics that come to mind)." It is the creed of apologetic Christians that has given apologetics a bad name.

Finally, we are glad to say that the editors of *Commonweal* are wrong. Ms. Haegel's creed is not representative of the magazine today, which is with growing frequency feisty, assertive, self-critical, and unapologetic about being Catholic. The fact, however, that the editors would lift such a vacuous essay from the past to sell their wares indicates that the paleoliberal fever has not been definitively shaken. Pray for continued recovery.

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PROGRESS AND RELIGION

Sherwood Sugden & Co. is not one of your big name New York publishers, but they are to be much commended for bringing back into circulation a number of classics, such as Christopher Dawson's 1930s lectures, *Progress and Religion* ($8.95 paper, 315 Fifth Street, Peru, Illinois 61354. Free catalog available.) We had occason to be rereading this admirable work when the news was filled with the tragic business about David Koresh and the siege of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. Television commentators chattered about the dangers of

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religion when it takes collective forms, and one network reporter opined that this "is another incident that adds to a bad time for religion in the modern world."

As Dawson understood, to say that religion is having a bad time is like saying that breathing has come under suspicion. So pervasive is the religious impulse that it seeks expression in innumerable pseudo-religions, including religions of science, revolution, and progress. He also understood that, if religion cannot find expression in a way that gives meaning in the mainstream of the culture, it will burst out in sometimes violent ways among those who have despaired of the culture. Dawson quotes, of all people, Nietzsche. "Let us not forget," wrote Nietzsche, "in the end what a Church is, and especially in contrast to every 'state': a Church is above all an authoritative organization which secures to the most *spiritual* men the highest rank, and *believes* in the power of spirituality so far as to forbid all grosser appliances of authority. Through this alone the Church is under all circumstances a *nobler* institution than the State." According to Nietzsche, the "plebeianism of the European spirit" is the consequence of the loss of that spiritual authority.

Sixty years ago in discussing the fate of Europe (meaning the West), Dawson offered a conclusion that needs slight emendation, if any, today. "This, however, is but a temporary phenomenon; it can never be the normal condition of humanity. For, as we have seen, the vital and creative power behind every culture is a spiritual one. In proportion as the spiritual element recovers its natural position at the center of our culture, it will necessarily become the mainspring of our whole social activity. This does not, however, mean that the material and spiritual aspects of life must become fused in a single political order which would have all the power and rigidity of a theocratic state. Since a culture is essentially a spiritual community, it transcends the economic and political orders. It finds its appropriate organ not in a state, but in a Church, that is to say a society which is the embodiment of a purely spiritual tradition and which rests, not on material power, but on the free adhesion of the individual mind. It has been the peculiar achievement of Western Christianity in the past to realize such an ideal in an organized spiritual society, which could co-exist with the national political units without either absorbing or being absorbed by them. The return to this tradition would once more make it possible to reconcile the existence of national independence and political freedom, which are an essential part of European life, with the wider unity of our civilization, and with that higher process of spiritual integration which is the true goal of human progress."

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AN ACCOMMODATING GOSPEL

The theologically astute Lutheran pastor, Leonard Klein, protests Elizabeth A. Johnson's "A Theological Case for God-She," published in *Commonweal*. Klein writes: "The gospel is not our effort to approximate the mystery and to 'Image God' and it cannot endure the religious turn to the subject, of which feminist theology is merely the latest installment. The gospel is a saving word to mortal sinners, addressed to us from outside us, by a God who offensively took flesh in one time, one place, and one man. Human religiosity has struggled against that gospel from the time of the church at Corinth, which likewise claimed a bundle of fresh revelations."

Johnson, to her credit, grasps the nettle, declaring it a "startling statement that the gospel cannot endure the religious turn to the subject." She declares: "In the early Christian centuries, some argued in similar fashion that the gospel could not survive the turn from a Jewish to a Hellenistic expression. In hindsight we see that if the gospel had *not* been preached in terms of Hellenistic culture, it would not have won the minds and hearts of most of the people in the then-known world. In fact, the very power of the gospel is revealed in its ability to keep pace with ongoing historical experience. For religions die when their lights fail, when they lose the power to connect people's current experience of the world with the ultimate mystery of God. The very best of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theology, both Protesant and Catholic, has been engaged in executing modernity's turn to the subject and, by now, its corrective in postmodern categories. Without this restatement in contemporary terms, the gospel would not be audible to most thinking Westerners today. To claim that the gospel cannot endure the turn to the subject is, in my view, to underestimate the gospel."

Whether or how Christianity made a "turn from a Jewish to a Hellenistic expression" is a complicated and much controverted question on which numerous books have been written since Adolf Harnack (d. 1930) gave the question its present shape. The logic of Johnson's argument would seem to be that, since one or more major accommodations of the gospel were accepted in the past, the accommodation that feminists propose must also be accepted. But surely that does not follow. As the Christian tradition bears witness to numerous accommodations, it also bears witness to numerous rejections of what was deemed incompatible with the gospel. Throughout Christian history, affirmations are accompanied by anathemas.

It may be true that what Johnson and others

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consider "the very best" of modern theology has been "engaged in executing modernity's turn to the subject," but maybe those theologians have been wrong. There are giants such as Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar who hardly fit her description of the very best. For those readers who are by now wondering what on earth is meant by the turn to the subject, it can be stated rather simply. The question is whether reality is recognized in the object that we perceive or whether reality is constituted by our perception. Put differently, does the subject determine the object or does the subject discover the object?

Some, wrongly in our judgment, attribute the turn to the subject to Descartes. It was Immanuel Kant who gave dogmatic definition, as it were, to the assertion that reality, including God, is the product of human subjectivity. As Nietzsche had the wit to point out, such a God is not what anybody means by God and therefore, if Kant and his epigones are right, God is dead. The atheist Ludwig Feuerbach provided a fuller elaboration of the claim that God, and indeed all of religion, is the product of human projection. As Klein observes, this is a very old controversy in which certain forms of feminist theology are "merely the latest installment." If, according to the turn to the subject, God is but the infinitely malleable imaging of our religious consciousness, why not God-She, or God-It, or, for that matter, God-Me?

The above discussion provides an occasion for mentioning, and warmly recommending, a book that we had intended to review but that undeservedly fell through the cracks. It is Josef Seifert's *Back to Things in Themselves* (Routledge/Kegan Paul), and it provides a very engaging philosophical alternative to the turn to the subject. Seifert represents the school called "phenomenological realism," which builds on the work of the early Edmund Husserl and does spirited battle against the legions of "transcendental idealists" (i.e., subjectivists) who fight under the banner of Kant and his sometimes improbable allies.

Admittedly, all of this might seem impossibly esoteric, but it has everything to do with what is preached from thousands of pulpits and taught to those who will bear the ministry of the churches in the years ahead. It has everything to do with whether, as Leonard Klein puts it, "The risen, cosmic Christ is the male, Jewish, wine-drinking, celibate, crucified apocalyptic prophet Jesus of Nazareth, who taught as of first importance and as liberating news to call God 'Our Father,' and who also in remarkable ways called women into a new community." Feminist theology has become today's focus of Christianity's ancient contest with gnosticism. Or, to say it in modernity's terms of the turn to the subject, the question is whether we constitute God or God constitutes us. Most believing Christians and Jews, unencumbered by the "very best" of theological education, have not had a hard time answering that question.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ All during the Cold War, when the question of Christians persecuted under Communism was raised, denominational and ecumenical offices would respond that they were engaged in "quiet diplomacy." The great concern was to "not disrupt the peace process." At almost all costs, or so it seemed, great care had to be taken not to upset the oppressor regimes, lest it result in "increasing international tensions." As critics pointed out, such quiet diplomacy usually meant silent diplomacy, or too often led Western churches to play the role of apologists for oppression. Now the Puebla Institute, a watchdog organization on human rights and religious rights in particular, notes some heartening change, at least with respect to Catholics and China. Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul and Minneapolis speaks for the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) on international affairs and is making clear that Catholics in this country should be more publicly assertive about religious persecution in China. Large numbers of Catholics, including as many as twenty bishops, are imprisoned for refusing to cut their ties to the Holy See and buckle under to the "patriotic" regulation of religion by the government. It is estimated that there are seven to ten million Catholics in China, with somewhat more than half of them having made their peace with the Patriotic Catholic Association. The others, along with many Protestant recalcitrants, are the object of an increasingly brutal crackdown by the regime. Fr. Drew Christiansen, who directs the USCC Office of International Justice and Peace, says the bishops decided to go public after realizing that "private, quiet diplomacy wasn't going to get us anywhere." The public protest inevitably impinges on more narrowly political questions such as China's "most favored nation" trade status. On those questions people may well disagree, but there should be no disagreement among Christians about the need to speak out as clearly and effectively as possible when fellow believers are persecuted for the faith.

■ From the studies done more than forty years ago by Alfred C. Kinsey, an Indiana University zoologist, "everybody has learned" that at least 10 percent of the male population is dominantly homosexual.

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Many scientists over the years have challenged that "finding," noting the unrepresentative nature of Kinsey's sampling (e.g., convicted criminals made up 25 percent of those interviewed, although less than one percent of the U.S. population) and Kinsey's oft-stated hostility to "normal" sexual behavior. In his work, the agenda of the sexual revolution was hardly a well-kept secret. Other studies have not supported the high figures offered by Kinsey. The relevant data in this debate are summarized in a thoughtful and thoroughly documented eight-page publication by the Family Research Council, "Sexual Disorientation." (Send $2 to 700 Thirteenth Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington D.C. 20005.) Recent reports that have made newspaper headlines suggest that about one percent of the male population is exclusively oriented to the same sex. People who try to be accommodating about such things now tend to allow that the figure may be 3 or 4 percent. Nobody knows for sure, except that it is much, much less than Kinsey's 10 percent. (Almost everybody seems to be agreed that the incidence of homosexuality among females is about half that for males.) Of course what figure one chooses to use does not affect the moral arguments regarding homosexuality. It does, however, have a strong bearing on the manipulation of myths in the effort to achieve moral legitimacy for "the gay lifestyle."

■ Veteran church analyst Robert Bachelder says, "Much of the economic justice ministry of the churches is an anachronism. Through their national and state bodies and ecumenical organizations, the churches seek to intervene directly in the public policy process." He has concluded that "such an approach is a dead end. The churches should close down their public policy offices." Very sensible advice, that. Bachelder believes that churches that want to make an economic and political difference need to organize locally, and points to models such as the East Brooklyn Congregations and the Interfaith Community Organization in Jersey City. One may have caveats about the churches attempting to exercise political clout at any level, but at least community organizing on the local scene holds them accountable to their people. Which is a great deal more than can be said for Everychurch's National Board for the Prophetic Rectification of Global Wrongs and Convincing Demonstration of Religion's Continuing Relevance in the Postmodern World.

■ The new national president of Planned Parenthood explains to the *Washington Post*: "The Catholic Church is also a social institution run by men, and they take positions they think are beneficial to its own nonreligious self-interest. From my perspective, the Church hasn't kept up with the times." Hasn't kept up with the times? We knew there was something odd about the Catholic Church.

■ "Adiaphora" in certain strains of classical Protestant thought are matters of indifference. Under ordinary circumstances, they are things that one can take or leave without moral culpability. Richard Hütter of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago argues that the distinction between the ultimate of God's word and the penultimate of the church's public responsibility is not an adiaphoron. On what constitutes authentic public ministry, he has this to say: "There is no public ministry where the ultimate of God's word is not proclaimed. There is no public ministry where the penultimate is not addressed with equal force and commitment. Thus, there is no public ministry where the penultimate becomes the ultimate, and the ultimate the penultimate. Nor is there public ministry where this distinction between and the togetherness of the ultimate and the penultimate is thought of as an adiaphoron. Where this is the case, politics becomes the ultimate and the freedom of the Christian is lost. Subordinating public ministry to the absolute primacy of politics means paying tribute to the tacit nihilism of liberal public philosophy and granting secular politics religious stature and ultimate status. And these still are the attributes of an idol."

■ "I used to think that everything else dies, and art alone exists forever, but it isn't true," says Cynthia Mailman. She is a Manhattan artist and has had a hard time of it. Some years ago she was moving one of her big murals. It blew off the top of her car on the freeway and was run over by a truck. The mural depicted God as a naked woman, using herself as a model, for a feminist religious-art project called "Sister Chapel." Then she did a huge mural inspired by a Pete Seeger song. It was painted on the outside of a building on Staten Island that was bricked over three years later. Most of her surviving work she stored in a house that promptly burned down, destroying all but one piece. She had the consolation, however, of knowing that her huge fifty-four foot long and eight foot high mural, "Commuter Landscape," was safely installed at the World Trade Center. It went up with the bomb, raising painful questions for Ms. Mailman about Her interest in art—or, more precisely, Her interest in Ms. Mailman's art.

■ Writing in that splendid new journal of theology, *Pro Ecclesia*, David Yeago of Lutheran Southern Seminary brings together about as well as anyone could in one article the fundamental error in a very common version of Reformation theology. The problem, put too briefly, is that pushing the critique called "the Protestant principle" (Paul Tillich) simply cannot sustain the reality called Church. The hefty title of Yeago's article is "Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology:

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Reflections On the Cost of a Construal." As the following paragraph indicates, he is criticizing not simply a certain form of Protestant theology but a dominant motif of our popular culture. "The logic is simple: if form is enslavement, then a God who took form in history would be an enslaving God. The liberating God must therefore be a formless God, a God at most dialectically related to any particular form, a God who is everywhere and nowhere, whose faceless elusiveness frees us from the tyranny of the particular and ordered and definitive. This is the God whom, we are told, we must not 'limit,' that is, whom we *must not* confess as definitively self-given and self-identified in Jesus Christ. This is the God whom we know only in an endless sequence of throwaway 'images' whose utility consists solely in their novelty, their capacity to shake us loose from familiar forms. This is the God with whom we commune only on an endless 'spiritual journey,' an infinite quest with no goal and no purpose except sheer ceaseless movement beyond form." The distance from Christological heresy to Oprah Winfrey turns out to be surprisingly short.

■ Allowances must be made for a certain measure of advertising distortion in promotional mailings. Here's a promotion from *Christian Century*, which is seeking to shore up its declining niche in the market. "The religious middle seems to be collapsing," we are told. "The choice, it seems, is to abandon the faith or take refuge in a narrow version of it." Declining that choice, editor James Wall says, "We engage all parts of our culture without losing touch with Christian tradition." Note: Without losing touch. Not grounded in the tradition, not boldly asserting the tradition, but staying in touch with it. The letter deplores "factions of the left and the right" and suggests that *Century* locates itself between them, a rather sure formula for the continuing collapse of the middle. Our own idea is not to stake out the middle ground but to stake out the ground ahead of existing polarizations. In any event, we wish the *Century* well. It is a voice of continuity with an oldline Protestantism that is, we persist in believing, still susceptible to renewal. And, if blandness is the price of holding on to the niche in the middle, there is something not entirely unadmirable in the *Century's* willingness to assume that burden.

■ There is a little monthly magazine of Catholic orientation that runs full-page advertisements for itself in almost every other magazine of intellectual pretension. (We will not mention its name again, but readers may remember that it is the magazine whose readers say their favorite magazine is First Things.) Goodness knows, we have nothing against a magazine promoting itself, but we do wish the magazine in question would adopt a line less embarrassingly defensive. For example, here in that fine journal, *The American Scholar,* is an ad titled "Can An Intelligent Person Be Religious?" The full page of text goes on to list dozens of presumably intelligent people who are also, mirabile dictu, religious. Really now. The ad's title question might have made a good deal of sense in, say, 1793, maybe even in secularized academic circles in the 1930s. And it's a perennial question for dormitory discussion by sophomores. But in forums of serious reflection in 1993? Today the village atheist, even the person who makes a public point of not being religious, is a mite quaint. Today we are swamped in religiosities of frequently maddening and incoherent varieties. The "constructions" and "construals" of postmodernists are on the friendliest terms with gods, goddesses, and godlets beyond numbering. And, in most universities of repute, it is no longer a scandal when distinguished faculty come out of the closet as orthodox Christians or Jews. It is to be feared that the antiquated line taken by the advertising campaign in question will lead some intelligent readers to think that its religious sponsors are, in fact, not very intelligent. Or perhaps they are not very secure in their positive answer to the question they pose. That is surely not what this worthy little magazine intends to communicate.

■ Anthony Ugolnik, Ukrainian Orthodox priest and First Things contributor, is rightly upset by the way the Waco, Texas, standoff with the Branch Davidians was used to besmirch the name of Seventh-day Adventists as a bunch of religious fanatics. He recalls serving in the military with Seventh-day Adventists who were pacifist, vegetarian, cheerful, stolidly faithful, and often "harassed mercilessly by drill instructors who routinely insulted their beliefs." Ugolnik writes in a letter to the *Times*: "Most often, Seventh-day Adventists were sent to combat units, where without even a sidearm they crawled directly into enemy fire to patch the wounded and retrieve the dead. Their casualty rates were among the highest of the war. There are names of Seventh-day Adventists etched in the wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Their memory is seared into those hapless cynics who served with them. They were the bravest, most committed, most heroic Americans I have ever known."

■ Oscar Handlin of Harvard, one of the most widely respected of American historians, takes note of the bicentennial of the Bill of Rights. Writing in *The American Scholar,* he suggests that we are in trouble, and the trouble is closely connected with the 1973 decision *Roe v. Wade.* To make its case for privacy, the Supreme Court had to draw on constitutional "penumbras" formed by "emanations" from specified guarantees. This, writes Handlin, "is a dangerous argument indeed, for it rested upon

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subjective judgments; one observer's penumbra may be the nightmare of another." Handlin concludes: "The effort to anchor the right to choice in the Bill of Rights by way of privacy did not settle the matter, which continues to divide citizens; for it rested upon exaggerated respect for the parchment barriers erected by judicial opinions. The citizens of the revolutionary era regarded theirs as a government by consent of the governed. And the governed respected the rights of others, not as defined by judges but as defined by their own experience and reason." Handlin's argument is, in word and substance, identical to Lincoln's protest against the *Dred Scott* decision that tried to constitutionalize slavery. If, Lincoln argued against Douglas and others, we accept the decision of the Court as the final word, we have in effect surrendered the notion that we are a self-governing people. Whatever one may think about morality and law with respect to abortion, scholars such as Handlin are surely right in warning that the judicial and political imperialism by which some have attempted to terminate the debate is a clear and present danger to the survival of constitutional governance.

■ Speaking of Operation Rescue and its like, *The New Republic* opines portentously: "And the American innovation is precisely this: that a liberal order is a secular order in the interest of religious people." But *TNR* was all over the place in trying to respond to the murder of Dr. David Gunn, abortionist, in Pensacola, Florida. The editorial comes close to chiding pro-abortionists: "There is a way in which secular liberals have contributed to the religious radicalism they are now combating." That is because some religious people sense that they are "being shut off from civic participation."

There is wisdom in *TNR*'s editorial. It is not easy for it to dissent, even in the most delicate and implicit manner, from the pro-abortion orthodoxy with which some of its editors are undoubtedly uneasy. But the editorial's basic error is to assume that the great question is one of what to do with "religious radicals." Twenty percent of the American people say that abortion should be prohibited absolutely, 60 percent say there should be some kind of compromise allowing for extreme cases. It is doubtful that *TNR* believes that 80 percent of the American population is composed of religious radicals. The fact is that the present and most imperious pro-abortion triumph in politics and law represents a closure of the democratic process that has indeed shut out the majority of Americans from civic participation with respect to deciding what ought to be done about abortion. It is an issue of moral judgment—and moral judgment is typically influenced by religious conviction—but for purposes of the "liberal order" that concerns *TNR*, it is first of all an issue of the integrity of the democratic process.

■ During the Reagan and Bush years the folks from the National Council of Churches were not especially welcome at the White House. It may have had something to do with their regularly accusing those Presidents of hardheartedness toward the poor, genocide in Latin America, and a generally favorable disposition toward nuclear holocaust. But now President Clinton has invited the NCC back in and he spent an hour talking with its leaders in the State Dining Room (news reports don't say whether they got dinner). The discussion ranged from gang violence in the cities to American policy toward Russia and Israel. The group also expressed its support for Clinton's economic proposals. Joan Campbell, general secretary of the council, waxed enthusiastic. "We appreciate your call to sacrifice," Ms. Campbell told the President. "You can count on this crazy band of Christians to be lobbyists for sacrifice." NCC boosterism for higher taxes is long-standing. We recall talking with our friend the late Eugene Carson Blake, then general secretary of the NCC, who contended that Americans were undertaxed. "I would love to pay more taxes," said Dr. Blake. We indicated, in a friendly way, that it was quite legal for him to send the government more money than it required of him. "Oh, but that's different," said he, "it would only be morally significant if everybody was required to pay more." He explained that that was the difference between social ethics and personal ethics. We didn't get it then and we don't get it now, but we can indeed count on that crazy band to keep beating the drums to make other people sacrifice.

■ According to the survey data, religion is bustin' out all over among the American people, but that doesn't seem to be the case at George Washington University in D.C. The school newspaper, the *GW Hatchet*, reports that a university-sponsored "religion week" was one big flop. The week was sponsored by various groups, including Hillel, the Ecumenical Christian Ministry, Students for Environmental Action, Wimmin's Issues Now, and the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance. The event for one night was an interreligious symposium on "responses to homosexuality," and only twelve students showed. The Catholic representative said that Catholics had all kinds of views on the subject but "it will take a long time for any changes in doctrine to occur." Another event was a musical theater interpretation of the Garden of Eden, "Guarding the Garden: An Eco-Feminist Portrayal of Genesis." Hillel sponsored an environmental seder and the concluding night of the week featured a showing of the Monty Python movie *The Life of Brian*. Given the relentless political correctness of what is meant by religion at George Washington, student indifference is a reflection of sound judgment. Why should anyone be interested in a religion week that is, to judge by this report, mainly

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given over to trashing religion?

■ The American founders were enlightened secularists who wanted to keep religion safely confined to the private sphere, which is the meaning of the separation of church and state. Statements such as that, variously expressed, are both reflective and reinforcing of a mythology entrenched in our elite culture and the textbooks written by its members. The only antidote is a deep immersion in the historical reality of the founding. One might begin, for example, by recommending to the misinformed *A Government of Laws: Political Theory, Religion, and the American Founding* by Ellis Sandoz (Louisiana State University Press). It is a fine, bracing book that brings together with scholarly care the religious and political convictions of those who were crucial to the founding. All had a confessed sense of Divine Providence guiding this *novus ordo seclorum*—and that certainly includes Thomas Jefferson, who is conventionally depicted as a militant secularist.

Sandoz writes gracefully about the melding of the religious and political, the biblical and the classical, in the founding intention. He underscores the way in which it was understood, as it is not understood today, that liberty and law are not enemies but the former is secured by observing the justice of the latter. Freedom was not doing what one wants but what one ought (". . . and the truth shall make you free," John 8). Sandoz has this to say about the diversities and passions that went into defining the distinctive thing called American: "Exactly when a properly 'American' outlook was achieved can be debated, and even such a like-mindedness (or homonoia) of a community transcending the localities and states to constitute the people's self-indentification, distinct from the English colonial ethos, obviously did not obliterate the diversity of the country intellectually and culturally. *America was pluralistic from the beginning.* It would seem to be conceded on all sides, however, that a new political culture came to startling maturity in the creative period we call the founding. This articulation of *America as a society organized for action in history* is proclaimed in the Declaration and realized in fact through the successive stages of founding previously noticed. Nor, lastly, should it be forgotten that as politically spectacular as the Federal Convention with its assembly of demigods truly was, some of history's limelight should fall elsewhere. Americans living in the original thirteen states plus Vermont demonstrated astonishing political prowess during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when they wrote, debated, and adopted no fewer than twenty-eight constitutions while rejecting a number of others along the way. Nor should we neglect to say that constitution-making in America did not begin with the period of the founding but extends from the early seventeenth century onward, as . . . over seventy such 'instruments of political foundation' demonstrates."

The founders, Sandoz emphasizes, were also very much indebted to the British common law tradition, and to Sir Edward Coke's version of the English "constitution." Like Robert Bolt's Sir Thomas More explaining to his daughter the interconnectedness of the laws, Sandoz admires the mighty aphorism of Sir Henry Maine. The liberties we enjoy, said Maine in the nineteenth century, "are secreted in the interstices of procedure." So Sandoz illumines the ways in which the genius of the American experiment is secreted in the interstices of religion and public life. *A Government of Laws*, available in paperback ($8.95), should be read by those who care about the distinctiveness of the American constitutional project, and how it might be set to right.

■ A hopeful progression may be evident here. The Canadian Catholic bishops conference makes the U.S. conference look like a nest of neoconservatism. The Canadian bishops have pronounced, and pronounced radically (they insist upon the term), on everything under the sun and perhaps a few things beyond. Unlike their American counterparts, they do not hesitate to embrace unabashedly socialist solutions to myriad public policies. Also unlike their cousins to the south, almost nobody in Canada pays attention except leftist activists in search of any blessings they can pick up on the cheap. The Canadian conference is a national bishops conference in the way that Canada is a nation. Much more important are the bishops conferences that divide along French-English and East-West lines. But the hopeful sign of progression is this: The first volume of the collected social statements by the Canadian bishops is titled *Do Justice!* and the second volume, also recently published, is titled *Love Kindness!* Perhaps, reflecting a major turn in tone and substance, the third volume will be titled *Walk Humbly With Your God!*

■ The Graduate Theological Union, out on the other coast, is no slouch when it comes to being on the cusp of things. Glenn R. Bucher is its president, and he writes in *Theology Today* that we're all much too exercised about political correctness. "The PC debate, in part, has to do with who writes history, whose culture and language are dominant, and who has the power. Those who worry about PC as a leftist version of McCarthyism have a legitimate concern. But as I said earlier, it is not one that's now very pertinent, given the big picture of dominant history, culture, and power. What's even more scary than being victimized by a new ideology—an experience most traditional theologians, seminaries, and churches have not had—is that if you get too far into the PC debate, whatever your views, you just could get changed yourself. Might the theological

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inclusiveness we mouth all the time actually blindside us in our more reactionary moments? Then, God forbid, the dialogue could conceivably change, too, as well as institutional goals—and the base of one's power. To imagine the prospect of such change is downright exciting and terrifying. How much do we want to be saved?" Undoubtedly, things look different when truth, even salvation, is viewed in terms of power. And they must look very different indeed if one's power base is, of all things, the Graduate Theological Union. Strange how theologians, in this century of their disempowerment, have become so preoccupied with power. Or maybe it's not so strange.

■ A number of new Catholic publications launched in recent years seem to reflect a felt need to strengthen ties between Rome and the Church in the U.S. That is one obvious purpose of *Inside the Vatican*, a lively new monthly whose premier issue has just appeared. Edited in Rome, the magazine wants to be viewed as being neither of the left or the right. Writes editor Robert Moynihan, "The conviction of *Inside the Vatican* can be set forth in six words: journalism must aspire to the truth." He will get no argument on that here, and the first issue does indeed demonstrate a nice judiciousness in both the selection and treatment of subjects as diverse as rumors (false) about the Pope's failing health and the meaning of conscience in Catholic moral theology. For information on this new venture write *Inside the Vatican*, New Hope, Kentucky 40052.

■ In an issue of *The National Interest* that is nothing short of brilliant, the "Strange Death of Soviet Communism" is analyzed from myriad angles. In that issue Irving Kristol has a little essay on what he did during the Cold War. Under the influence of Lionel Trilling and Reinhold Niebuhr he tried very hard and for many years to be a liberal, despite everything. But then he came to the conclusion, painfully and reluctantly, that the rot and decadence of our culture "was no longer the consequence of liberalism but was the actual agenda of contemporary liberalism." The culture wars, writes Kristol, are the new and much more difficult cold war. He writes: "It is a cold war that, for the last twenty-five years, has engaged my attention and energy, and continues to do so. There is no 'after the Cold War' for me. So far from having ended, my cold war has increased in intensity, as sector after sector of American life has been ruthlessly corrupted by the liberal ethos. It is an ethos that aims simultaneously at political and social collectivism on the one hand, and moral anarchy on the other. It cannot win, but it can make us all losers. We have, I do believe, reached a critical turning point in the history of the American democracy. *Now that the other 'Cold War' is over, the real cold war has begun.* We are far less prepared for this cold war, far more vulnerable to our enemy, than was the case with our victorious war against a global Communist threat. We are, I sometimes feel, starting from ground zero, and it is a conflict I shall be passing on to my children and grandchildren. But it is a far more interesting cold war—intellectually interesting, spiritually interesting—than the war we have so recently won, and I rather envy those young enough for the opportunities they will have to participate in it."

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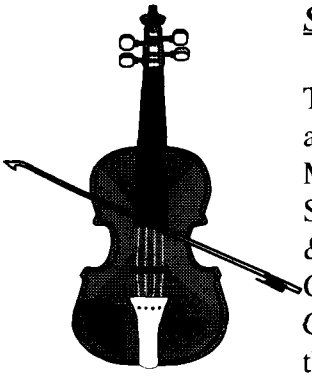

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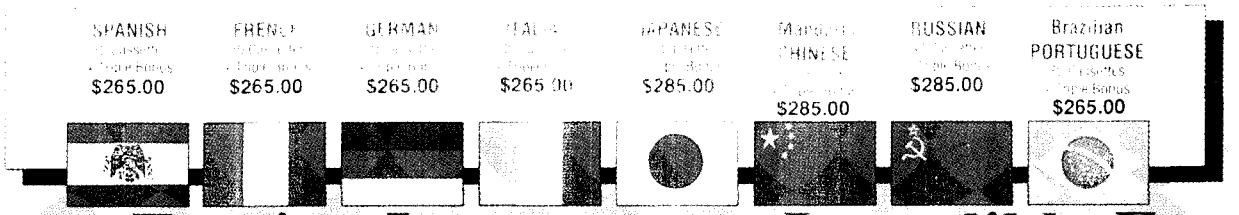

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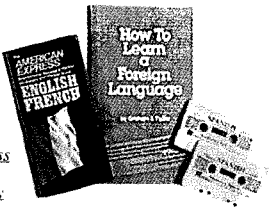

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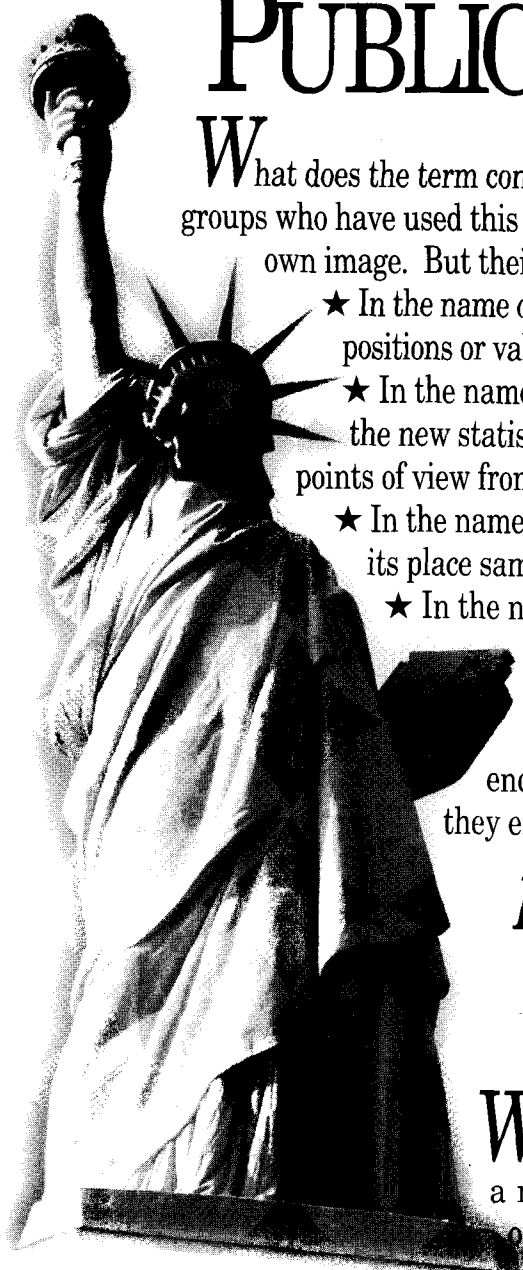

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